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THE

CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF LIFE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

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HANDSWORTH COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM

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PREFACE

THE first of the following essays, which gives its name to the volume, and in some sort forms an introduction to the rest, is now published for the first time. The remainder have appeared during the last few years in the *London Quarterly Review*, and my thanks are heartily tendered to the editor and publishers for allowing me to reprint them. It is hoped that, in spite of the fact of their appearing separately in the first instance, and still bearing upon them the marks of their origin, they possess sufficient unity of subject and treatment to be thus published together, and claim a little longer respite from oblivion. If they aid in commending characteristic Christian views of life to some who have not been disposed to accept them, or in strengthening the hold of the Christian faith on others who may have been wondering and doubting rather than believing, the end for which they were written will be abundantly answered.

W. T. D.

HANDSWORTH, *March* 1898.

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I.

THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF LIFE.

THERE are several ways in which the claims of a religion to the allegiance of men may be brought to the test, and either verified or disallowed. Its credentials may be examined, the circumstances of its rise and origin, the authentications of Divine revelation which it professes to furnish. Or, its influence on the world may be gauged and measured, the effect of its teaching in the purification of morals, the standard of conduct, its power to elevate character and renew life, as illustrated in history. Or, the intrinsic power and depth of the spiritual truth which forms its nucleus may be estimated by the place it has occupied in the history of thought and its hold upon the instinctive and reasoned beliefs of mankind.

There remains another method of trial, in some respects akin to that last-named, yet essentially different from it—the attempt to exhibit and justify the interpretation of life which is implicit in religious teaching, the power which a religion possesses adequately to explain and interpret the history of the world as it unfolds itself before the fullest and best knowledge of succeeding generations. It is a part of the function of religion to explain man to himself, and to combine in living unity his deepest thoughts concerning the

universe, its genesis, history, purpose, and destiny, with especial emphasis on man's own part in the complex drama enacting itself continuously before his eyes. In proportion, then, as a religion succeeds in presenting such a view of God, man, and the known universe as satisfies the conditions of the case, it commends itself to the enlightened intellect and conscience of each succeeding epoch; and failure to meet these conditions in the case of any religion leads to sure, though it may be gradual, decay. Even false religions die hard, because rooted in cherished beliefs and surrounded by hallowed associations, but die they must, sooner or later, if they fail to maintain the eternal Law of Righteousness or satisfy the demands of the eternal Kingdom of Truth.

Christianity has been tested, repeatedly and severely, from every point of view in turn. But it is on this side especially—the truth or falsity, the adequacy or insufficiency of its interpretation of life—that it has been most seriously assailed during the present generation. The reason is obvious. The views of life, its origin, nature, scope, and meaning, which prevailed at the beginning of this century, have been almost revolutionised. It has been usual to define "modern thought" as dating from the sixteenth century, so great was the change effected at that period in the habits of thought of western civilisation. But a new Renascence has taken place in the nineteenth century, one which is not yet complete, and the "modern" view of God and the world is one which has hardly yet been formulated, but which rules contemporary thought none the less mightily because it still largely lies in the background of consciousness. And the reason why Christianity is condemned almost unheard by some of

the most active intellects of the present generation is because it is assumed to contravene, or not adequately to account for, the characteristics of life as understood by modern thinkers.

In the minds of believers, the difficulties raised by the rapid increase of knowledge naturally assume another shape. With some, the temptation to discard ancient beliefs which seem to come into collision with new knowledge may strongly present itself; but with others, probably the majority, two modes of regarding the world and life lie side by side in their minds, unreconciled and apparently unrelated. From philosophy, physical science, and history — or from that curious amalgam of some current forms of these which goes by the name of modern thought—they receive certain ideas which occupy a portion of their mental storage-room, and from Christian tradition ideas more or less incompatible with them. These divergent sets of ideas repose apart in separate sections or air-tight compartments of the mind, seldom or never brought into actual living contact with each other; remaining—to change the figure—separate or slightly related strands and threads, when they should be closely interwoven and form the very warp and woof in the fibre of intellectual and moral constitution. Such a dualism cannot last long in a healthy and active mind. It is not, as it is sometimes represented, an antagonism between Faith and Reason. Rational elements are present on both sides, and from neither is faith entirely absent. But unity of World-view is lacking. Sometimes religion may prevail, and thoughts suggested from other quarters slumber in the background, a kind of irreducible surd in the problem, neglected in practice;

whilst at other times, or in another class of minds, religious considerations fade into the distance, under pressure of questions thrust to the front by what seem to be the irresistible demands of actual life. The sea of faith has not been dried up or its volume diminished, but it is no longer "at the full," and there are those who, like Matthew Arnold, "only hear

> Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
> Retreating, to the breath
> Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
> And naked shingles of the world."

But a tide at ebb will soon turn. And the figure of an ebb-tide of faith hardly fits the facts. The Christian faith of the present generation has had the arduous task presented to it of absorbing and assimilating a mass of new "knowledge," concerning a considerable portion of which it was difficult to determine how far it was knowledge and how far speculation. But a process of sifting has been going on, and draws near completion. A process of assimilation, too, has been silently taking place, and is already well advanced. There is some danger, however, lest the synthesis be premature; lest, on the one hand, the attitude of Christianity be misunderstood, and religion lose at least some of its hold on the thinking portion of the community; or, on the other, lest Christianity should fail to meet the demands made upon it, and to include in its scope all the elements of the problems presented to it. The chief difficulty at present arises from the impossibility of determining what those elements in their entirety are, and of distinguishing between ascertained fact and plausible theory, between probable hypothesis and verified conclusion. Patience is neces-

sary. "It is a sore travail," said the Jewish sage, "that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith, even to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven." But it brings with it a reward that Koheleth, in his gloomy words, had never anticipated, and from this toil it is as undesirable, as it is happily impossible, that man should ever be freed. Signs are not wanting that, at the close of the nineteenth century, we are approaching one of those periods in the unravelment of the æonian tangle, when a great length of thread, coiled in apparently inextricable knots, triumphantly disengages itself, and the thoughts of man concerning the universe, released from some sore complications, will run more freely and easily than they have done for generations past. But the temper of mind needful for untying knots must be carefully preserved. "Don't think, try," was John Hunter's motto; "be patient, be accurate." "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," wrote an inspired apostle. The patience of those who are content neither to rebel against the claims of religion, nor to discard the toilsomely acquired results of science, will be rewarded by the attainment of a sure position, such as cannot be reached by rash and crude attempts at the construction of an edifice for which only a portion of the materials have been gathered.

I.

A measure of inconsistency or incompatibility has been assumed between two divergent interpretations of the world and life as existing in our own time. It is needless to say that there never can be discrepancy or

contradiction between true science and true religion. These are but diverse modes of considering the same complex facts, which, from the very nature of the case, are susceptible of varying modes of treatment. But there may be the greatest possible divergency between the "science" and the "religion" of a particular country or generation or period, because the knowledge of phenomena styled "science" may be imperfect or erroneous, or the "religion" may be blended with ignorance or superstition or traditional error, or both these conditions may prevail together. At any given moment, in a given educated mind, it is not unlikely that science, falsely so called, may be found contending with religion, imperfectly understood; and the contention may be so sore between them that one or the other must give way. In our own time this may be shown to have been the case more than once. Behind physical science has lain from time to time a false metaphysic, which has controlled the thoughts of teachers who have professed to dispense with metaphysics altogether, and science has been made responsible for conclusions lying altogether outside her province. And, on the other hand, religion has been sometimes identified with a religious philosophy which is little more than the remains of strata of bygone thought—thought valuable enough in its day, and not without elements of perennial truth; but, in form and substance alike, a conglomerate of past ages, not to be hastily discarded as so much lumber, but not to be lightly identified with that Divine truth which lies enshrined at its inmost centre.

Christian Gnosticism has been to some extent responsible for unchristian Agnosticism. In all ages the tendency has existed to round off systems of religious

belief by reading in human speculations between the lines of Divine revelation, and to identify Christian faith with particular interpretations of ill-understood passages in the Old and New Testaments. The elaborate accretions which Romanists claim as having been "developed" from the simplicity of primitive belief form only a more striking illustration of a tendency present even in Protestant and Puritan communities, inseparable, indeed, from all system-making. It is not intended to suggest that system-making is in itself either inadmissible or pernicious. It is simply inevitable, springing as it does from an imperious necessity of the human mind to co-ordinate its thoughts into a more or less homogeneous whole. But we are reminded of the importance of watching the process and of distinguishing between the various forms of the Christian interpretation of life. There are so many Christianities, varying with the age, the Church, and individual constitution. The only satisfactory court of appeal in deciding between them is the New Testament, so that when we seek to define the meaning of the "Christian interpretation of life," we understand that which is in accord with the teaching of Christ and the apostles. This appeal is distasteful to the ecclesiastic, who objects to anything which seems to lower the authority of the Church. But Churches have sometimes been one main source of difficulty in this matter; and, if the Fathers of even the earliest centuries be admitted as authorities, we find ourselves breathing a different atmosphere from that of the New Testament, and committed to forms of philosophy which belonged only to a period, and became obsolete almost before the generation which had produced them had passed away.

Christianity, rightly understood, is committed to no theory of the genesis of the universe, to no system of human psychology, to no law of human progress. Christianity is not a philosophy, and as a religion it has no philosophy of history to present; it possesses the advantages and must bear the disabilities which belong to independence of these changing systems. Attempts at Christian philosophy have been common and are for the most part laudable, but they must always be carefully distinguished from Christianity as a religion. Christianity is a historical religion, of which the redemption of man is the central and ruling thought. Presented in unsystematic form in the New Testament, it depends upon the Personality and Work of a historical personage, and is bound up with the view of both these taken by certain persons called apostles, accepted by the first disciples, embodied as principles of action in their lives, and found to be potent enough as religious ideas to conquer the Roman empire and change the course of history. It is clear, however, that certain logical presuppositions are necessary for the establishment of the truth of this doctrine, as well as certain moral and spiritual postulates, the denial of which must be fatal to the claims of this religion. Christianity implies a personal God, immanent in the world, transcendent over it, who has revealed himself in many ways through the ages, but especially along the line of Israelitish history. It implies a spiritual nature in man; sin, in the sense of a departure on man's part from the original thought and plan of God in creation; and an eternal purpose on the part of a God of love to deliver man from the evil thus self-inflicted. It implies, further, a divine self-manifestation of an unique kind in the

person of Jesus Christ, whom the Christian holds to be the Son of God incarnate, in His suffering and death, which were necessary for the accomplishment of human redemption, and in His resurrection from the dead—a supernatural history whose chief significance would be lost if the mission of Jesus were resolved into a somewhat fuller revelation of the same nature as that granted to earlier Hebrew prophets. Christianity implies, further, the operation of the Holy Spirit in man, the establishment of a Divine kingdom on earth, a promised triumph over evil, a future life for every man, with eternal rewards and punishments of high and awful sanction, declarative of ultimate human destiny. There may be abundant difference of opinion concerning the phraseology in which these truths are to be expressed, and some difference of opinion as to the truths themselves, but it can hardly be claimed that less than this will adequately set forth in outline the Christianity of the New Testament.

If, on the other hand, there be no personal Ruler of the universe, or none who can be known by man; if the ultimate Cause of the universe, so far as our knowledge goes, be an inscrutable Power, and a sufficient explanation of its constitution be found in force and motion; if it be understood that the universe with its inherent forces sufficed for its own self-production, and man be only a resultant of these, a child of "Force, the dread mother of unfathered worlds"; if free-will be a delusion and personality a dream, self-consciousness only the ringing of a telegraph bell while the current of sensation passes along the wires; if the idea of a future life be only the product of a too lively imagination, and death a happy release from the burden of individual

existence; if the regularity of natural law be an iron band from which no escape is possible or conceivable, and the thought of a purpose in the universe is either a fiction or utterly undiscoverable and unintelligible; or if some only of these hypotheses characteristic of our time be provable—then the whole Christian religion is a terrible delusion, and its interpretation of life a mischievous lie. The strife between extremes thus formulated must clearly be internecine; no quarter can be given and no compromise is possible.

But it will be observed that all these are conclusions, not of physical science, but of a philosophy to which the reasonings of physical science are supposed to lead. It is obviously impossible for physical science to establish theses of this sort. They lie entirely outside her realm and beyond her ken; and, whilst there might conceivably be good reasons for holding these as hypotheses, most easily fitting the ascertained facts of the universe, physical science is herself quite incompetent to pronounce upon them. Beginning with ascertained facts of nature and history, and taking these alone, but these altogether impartially into account, it may be shown that there are other hypotheses more fully adequate to account for these facts, and room may be found for a Christian interpretation of life which shall cover the whole ground and show itself equal to the accomplishment of a task in which Agnosticism and Positivism, Deism and Pantheism, have alike conspicuously failed.

II.

So far as the establishment of the elementary truths of Theism is concerned, it is not necessary to say much,

since the distinctive truths of Christianity are not directly involved. But it can hardly be denied that, during the last few years, a reaction has taken place against phenomenalism in philosophy, Hedonism in ethics, and the reasoned Pessimism—a counsel of despair—which was the natural outcome of these, in favour of a more spiritual view of the world—its Author, God, and its chief inhabitant, man. Professor Huxley, in his Romanes Lecture, published towards the close of his life, pointed out the signs in nature—the ethical conditions of man—of that which is above nature and contrary to nature. Mr. G. J. Romanes became conscious of the shallowness of the reasoning which, as "Physicus," he had put forward in earlier years, and, by insisting on the pure Agnosticism of science, made the way clear for the true knowledge which comes by way of revelation and faith. The effect of Mr. Herbert Spencer's reasoning as to the ultimate cause of the universe has hardly been what he intended. When he has demonstrated, on scientific grounds, the existence of the One Inscrutable Power—concerning which, however, we are assured of its unity, its energy, its persistence alike in physical phenomena around us, and the welling up of consciousness within—he has still left room for all that the Theist requires; and in that region over which science has written "unexplored and inexplorable," revelation has shown itself a sufficient guide, and has furnished waymarks and opened up paths in which the simplest traveller need not go astray. Theories of the origin of religion are as yet young, but Tiele in his Gifford Lectures, and Jevons in his *Introduction to the History of Religion*, have shown how inadequate are the theories current some five and twenty years ago to

account for the rise and subsequent development of religion in the history of the world. The spiritual philosophy of Green and Martineau may not perhaps be considered as accepted beyond the limits of a comparatively narrow school, but idealism has produced a marked effect upon the habits of thought of many who are not prepared to accept all its tenets; and the facts of human consciousness, rightly analysed and understood, have been shown to contain implications not dreamed of in the previously fashionable pseudo-philosophies of Mill and Bain. Objections against "anthropomorphism" have been weighed and found wanting. Personality as an attribute of Deity has been shown to constitute, not a degrading limitation, but the highest characteristic of the highest form of being known to us; and Lotze's argument, that personality in its fulness pertains to the Divine Being alone, whilst man possesses but a pale copy thereof, the finiteness of the finite being "not a producing condition of this personality but a limit and hindrance of its development," has been seen to correspond with the facts of the case. The tendency even in Monism to resolve all matter into force, all force into mind, has influenced many of those unable to accept its fundamental postulates.

On the other hand, there can be little question that Theism occupies different ground from that which was commonly assumed a generation ago. The excessive insistence on the transcendence of the Deity, a relic of eighteenth century Deism, has happily given way to a reasonable doctrine of the Divine Immanence, which retains the truth at the heart of Pantheism, while rejecting its errors. The mechanical "carpenter-theory"

of the universe has given way before the organic; and, as men's views of the universe have changed, their views of the relation between God and the universe have changed with them. In what used to be called the proofs of the Divine existence—the cosmological, teleological, and other arguments—a fundamental change has taken place. Kant's criticisms, some of which were transient and ineffective, did but point out the way which has been increasingly taken by thinkers of all schools trained in scientific methods. The "proofs" are seen to be no proofs, in the sense of demonstrations of that which cannot be proven, but confirmations to the reason, varying in strength and cogency, and valid only within defined limits, of an ultimate truth which cannot be demonstrated, because it is itself the implicit postulate of all rational thought. The cosmological argument, it is seen, does not carry us beyond the unity of the world-ground; the teleological argument has altered its character, from an insistence upon the evidences of detailed design to an indication of the Order and Purpose discernible in the Cosmos upon the large scale. The ontological argument in its older forms—for it has had many, from Anselm to Hegel—has been forsaken, only to be more strongly urged from the point of view that God is the necessary *prius* of all human thought. The moral argument, while compassed in our day with fresh difficulties of its own, has been heightened and deepened in its character, and stress is now laid on *anthropic* as distinguished from *cosmic* arguments for the existence of a wise and righteous World-Ruler.

Such are some indications of the gradual approximation which has been taking place between the negative form of unbelief, known as Agnosticism and pure Theism.

Others are discernible in the region of Evolutionary Theory, no longer a battleground in which irreconcilable hostile forces engage, but an area in which rival teachers are busily staking out their own claims, that it may be justly partitioned between them. The original hostility with which evolution was met on the part of religious teachers has largely passed away; partly perhaps because they more accurately understand its character, but partly also because its advocates have shifted their ground. The nature of the issues involved is more clearly marked out than at first was possible. Evolution proper has been distinguished from a materialistic philosophy, with which at first it was naturally, though unwarrantably, identified. Even now the use of the word is often vague and indefinite enough. But when we understand by it, with Le Conte, a "continuous progressive change, according to certain laws, worked out by means of resident forces," or with Huxley, "a progressive development from a condition of relative uniformity to one of relative complexity," it is easily seen, as Huxley himself says, that this is no explanation of a cosmic process, but "merely a generalised statement of the methods and results of that process." It is the observance of this obvious distinction between *mode* and *cause* which has changed the attitude of Christian teachers. So far as the method adopted by the Creator in the genesis and maintenance of the universe is concerned, religion is content to leave this to science; that which aroused legitimate hostility and opposition was the identification of mode with cause, and the bold assumption that the origin of the universe was explained when a portion of its history was (hypothetically) recounted.

Even so it is a question whether in the "generalised statement of method," generalisation has not been too hasty and sweeping. Scientific men have never fairly faced the fact of all that is involved in the initial phenomena, summed up in the phrase "primitive nebulosity." The origin of life finds no satisfactory place in the system of gradual and imperceptible changes which the theory requires. The process of natural selection is not a productive cause; the nature of heredity is still in dispute; the element of chance in variations has never been satisfactorily fitted into the scheme which is supposed with such "unerring skill" to work itself out "by means of resident forces"; above all, the phenomena of human self-consciousness, will, and choice, present an element so different in kind from all that the cosmic process has hitherto evolved, that some of its staunchest advocates hold that here at least evolutionary theory breaks down.

We are not anxious to press these objections, though in an examination of the points at issue these and many others claim an answer which they have not yet received. As a fairly probable working hypothesis which accounts for many, though by no means all, the phenomena it undertakes to deal with, Theism has no quarrel with evolution. But theists pause before such phrases as that "man is as much a part of nature, as purely a product of the cosmic process, as the humblest weed,"[1] and they cannot be surprised when the same writer tells us that natural knowledge tends more and more to the conclusion that "all the choir of heaven and the furniture of the earth" are but "the transitory

[1] Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 50.

forms of parcels of cosmic substance wending along the road of evolution, from nebulous potentiality, through endless growths of sun and planet and satellite; through all varieties of matter; through infinite diversities of life and thought; possibly through modes of being of which we neither have a conception, nor are competent to form any, back into the indefinite latency from which they arose."[1] Evolution is not pledged to this gospel of "indefinite latency," any more than religion is pledged to all resistance to the law of continuity and the maintenance of the old fashion of finding God mainly "in gaps," as if breaches of continuity were somehow Divine, and the upholding of law, whose "seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world," were to be handed over to some Demiurge of lesser authority and doubtful character! Surely it is essentially a heathen idea that only the arbitrary and exceptional should prove the Divine, and that, unless breaks of continuity were discernible, the God of order must be banished from his own universe. At the same time, it is clear that the God who works by general laws is not precluded from intervention, on due cause assigned; and it may please Him to teach His creatures by occasional miracle, as well as by the prevailing observance of regular order.

All depends on the point of view from which evolution is regarded. Granted all its premisses, even those which are most doubtful, then the unfolding of the Cosmos out of primitive nebulosity enhances the wonderful character of the primeval mass, not lessens the glory of the existent order. "Everything *is* that which it may become, not that out of which it came."

[1] *Ibid.* p. 50.

The real issue is not between evolution and a number of separate special creations, but between orderly development—whether by way of evolution or some other way—*with* a purpose and development *without* a purpose. The view that species were separately created, not gradually evolved, was but a short time ago held by scientific men as well as by theologians; and it is clear, as Huxley himself has admitted, that a primal molecular constitution of matter may have been arranged for the evolution of a universe. Evolution does not exclude teleology, though unquestionably it affects its character. The design argument, in the shape it will probably assume in the course of the twentieth century, will of a certainty be more comprehensive and more cogent than it was possible for the eighteenth or even the nineteenth century to conceive.

In other words, the chasm which some five and twenty years ago separated the militant Agnosticism of physical scientists from the Theism of the time, has been bridged by concessions and modifications on both sides. Natural theology has in some respects altered its character and taken a new lease of life. Only it must not be based on "nature" excluding man, nor on the whole phenomena of the world as presenting themselves to the *mere* student of physical science, cramped and fettered as he must be by the methods which properly pertain to his special studies. The observer of "nature," who is to found a natural theology, must come to his study with spiritual conceptions, or he will never arrive at spiritual Being. This does not imply a reading into the phenomena of what they do not contain, but a true drawing forth from them of that which can only be

spiritually discerned, but without which the phenomena themselves are unintelligible.

III.

These are but preliminaries, though important and essential preliminaries, to an examination of a Christian interpretation of life. If it may be assumed that a study of nature in the full light of modern knowledge leads to, though it cannot of itself demonstrate, the doctrine of a personal God and Ruler of the universe, the way is prepared for further inquiry. It is perfectly true that nature, taken alone, while it furnishes overwhelming testimony *that* God is, tells us comparatively little of *what* He is. To understand as much as we may of the moral attributes of the Almighty, His mind and heart, His will and purpose towards man, other steps must be taken. The term Revelation is in practice confined to that further and special self-manifestation of God, in which He speaks more clearly and articulately to man in His own language, and especially to that manifestation in Christ which furnishes a distinct interpretation of the meaning of the universe, the validity of which we are now considering. And the position taken up in this essay is that, on the great subjects of the nature of God, the constitution of man, his origin, character, and destiny, and the redemption of the individual and the race, the Christian interpretation of life is not inconsistent with anything which has been satisfactorily established in what is called the "modern" view, but in some important respects is confirmed by modern researches, while all along the line it unspeakably transcends them.

Take, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity. This is essentially Christian, and it is the element in the Christian doctrine of God which is most usually objected to as unreasonable and incredible. What is meant by calling this a doctrine of revelation? It is no result of abstract speculation, but is essentially *given* by God, an induction from the facts on which Divine revelation in Christ is based. Christianity took its rise in the midst of Judaism, the most intensely monotheistic of all religions; yet, in its sacred books, as has been abundantly shown, there are adumbrations, hints, suggestions, that God is not to be conceived of as one in the simplicity of "indiscrete and undifferentiated existence," a solitary, single, separated, and individual Being, but as organically one, embracing in His undivided and indivisible unity personal distinctions which are perfectly consistent with it. Deism is not the religion of the Old Testament, though something like it did become the doctrine of later Judaism, and its spirit is largely reflected in that bastard Judaism which is known as Mohammedanism.

The Christian holds that God is One in substance, power, and glory, but that in the unity are three modes of subsistence. Not that God is one and three in the same sense, which is a contradiction; nor that in one substance there are simply three modes of manifestation—for this does not imply essential or internal distinctions; but that in the unity of the Godhead are three—what for want of a better word are called—Persons, the term itself in Latin and in English being easily misunderstood, for want of a word corresponding to the Greek ὑπόστασις. There is in the Godhead no division of substance, but each of three Hypostases has

His peculiar properties, relations, and mode of subsistence. In the unfolding of this doctrine there has always been danger lest the unity of the Divine Being should be sacrificed, and to the existence of this danger we have of late been recalled; but, in dwelling upon the unity, it is important not to lose sight of the threefoldness; and this, which is the distinctively Christian contribution to the doctrine of God, finds striking confirmation in the study of the Divine relation to the universe, as unfolded in modern science and philosophy. Theism is indeed a difficult theory to maintain long in its purity, and never has been held for any length of time in history, except as the religion of the few. Judaism and its two successors, Christianity and Mohammedanism, have been the only monotheistic religions; and of these it may be shown that the second forms a legitimate and the third a spurious development of the first. When Christ said, "Believe in God, believe also Me," the second injunction did not interfere with the former, but made it clearer, more credible, and unspeakably more helpful.

The following are some of the ways in which the Christian doctrine of the Trinity strengthens the case of Theism, in its interpretation of the relations between God and the world.

1. It removes the difficulties which, on the theory of a creation in time, beset the idea of a solitary God, self-sufficing throughout the ages of eternity. Philosophy has felt the need of an eternal universe to complete the eternal existence of the Deity, who must be conceived as having no scope for the exercise of thought, activity, and love. Deism drives to Pantheism, and Pantheism cuts the knot instead of untying it,

by identifying the All with God. A believer in the Trinity, though he does not presume to understand all that the doctrine implies, finds in the eternal relations of three Persons a basis for the Divine self-sufficiency, activity, and love, independently of a created universe.

2. It sheds light upon the revelation of the eternal and absolute in temporal and conditioned existence, and opens up its meaning in a way otherwise impossible to philosophical conception. If in the Godhead there are eternal modes of being, known as Son and Spirit as well as Father, then, when revelation to created spirits and manifestation in the finite is called for, it is possible to conceive of God in the likeness of man, God as personal Spirit unfolding Himself in the development of finite history. The false dignity of the Divine upheld by philosophy, as if God were so great that He could not stoop to make Himself known, is removed, whilst the true glory of the Divine Father as seen in the Son is revealed.

3. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity makes it possible to harmonise—so far as these high themes are within human ken—the transcendence and immanence of the Divine Being in relation to the world. The Christian God is not shut up in self for fear of losing Himself in the universe; nor is He a great First Cause leaving effects to work themselves out; nor does He stand aloof from the imperfections of the finite, and the wanderings of the disobedient; but, while transcending all in power and glory, He upholds all by His own Divine indwelling in creation, and graciously proposes to restore all to Himself by the gift of His Son.

4. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity ethicises the theistic doctrine of God, which, taken alone, tends

to become a bare philosophical abstraction. The heart of man cries out for more than any philosophical conception of Deity can supply. Science views God under the categories of cause and effect, philosophy under the categories of substance and accidents, but the soul cries out for a living God. Christianity has not only taught that God is love, but shown how this can be realised. Love throughout eternity, of Father, Son, and Spirit; love as the cause of creation, displacing the doctrine of a necessary universe; love still more in history and in redemption, the manifestation of God arrayed in the supreme excellence of qualities hitherto considered as exclusively human.

"Would I suffer for him that I love? So would'st Thou—so wilt Thou!
So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak;
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever; a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee. See the Christ stand!"

5. The practical effects of this doctrine on heart and life are not seen so long as the theologians are engaged in Trinitarian controversies. There is nothing more repellent to many minds than the technical distinctions of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, substance and person, with which, as they assert, Greek metaphysic has burdened

Christian teaching concerning God. Nothing is easier than to sneer at the Homoousion and the supreme value attached to an iota. But Athanasius perceived that belief in redemption was bound up with the retention of an abstract formula, and Carlyle, who at one period of his life scoffed at Nicene controversies, afterwards acknowledged that Athanasius was right, and that Christianity itself was at stake in the conflict with Arianism. Unitarianism has been lofty, pure, and cold; in its teaching the heinousness of sin, the possibility of forgiveness, the need of renewal, sink into the background. It has been sterile as a faith, has failed to touch the heart and conscience of mankind, and has been compelled to turn to projects of political and social reformation as a substitute for that deeper redemption of the individual and the race, for which its creed can find no room.

Coleridge once wrote: "I affirm that the article of the Trinity is religion, is reason and its universal formula; and that there neither is, nor can be, any religion, any reason, but what is, or is an expansion of the truth of the Trinity." That is to say, rightly understood, both reason and religion lead man up to belief in God as a unity but more than a bare and simple unity; they necessitate a belief in a God, to whom the existence of the world is no necessity; they lead us to a God capable of self-manifestation in a sense impossible to the absolute and unconditioned of religious philosophy; they prove that a God who cannot or will not redeem His creatures from sin and shame is unworthy of the name of a Divinity, and that redemption implies God the Son, and God the Spirit, as well as God the Father. Whether these statements can be made

good in the phraseology of Coleridge we are not now discussing; they lie implicit in his strong, perhaps exaggerated language. What is certain is, that a doctrine which took its rise out of certain great historical realities, and is seen to be all important for redemption, is also seen to be in accordance with highest human reason, though reason itself was powerless to discover it.

IV.

From the view of God we pass to the view of man presented in the Christian religion. The complaint made against Christianity is, that it places man at the same time too high and too low; too high as regards the aim, conception, and purpose of his creation; too low as regards the actual facts of his history, making him out to be worse than he is, needlessly accusing him of sin, and loading him with undeserved guilt. The naturalistic views of human nature current in the last century were optimistic, Rousseau and the *Contrat Social* representing one characteristic phase. These, however, proved to be transient enough; and now, from quite another side, a widely contrasted picture of humanity is presented. Both cannot be true; and the contention here urged is, that Christianity has preserved its own consistent account of the constitution and condition of man, thus avoiding both optimistic and pessimistic extremes, and that on some points her teaching is startlingly confirmed by the science of to-day. At the same time, there are important points of contrast and contradiction, and at some of these the issue is so joined that compromise is impossible.

It may at once be granted that some Christian

teachers have gone far beyond their warrant in the picture drawn of the Fall of man. Scripture gives very scanty information concerning the state of Adam before the Fall. The phrase, "the image of God," is susceptible of various interpretations, and some have drawn on their imagination in describing a state of moral and intellectual perfection, so that "Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise." Where some have undoubtedly erred, others should be careful how they dogmatise. But the phrase, "image of God," is probably intended only to teach that man as spirit was, unlike the lower animals, possessed of consciousness, will, and a spiritual constitution, being dowered at the same time with moral capacities and possibilities, rather than a moral character, which by the nature of the case could be attained only by exercise. The freedom of will which belongs to such a constitution leaves room for the possibility of sin as well as of a course of virtuous obedience to the will of God, and Christianity, following the Old Testament Scriptures, teaches that temptation was presented and actually yielded to, entailing, as a result, evil consequences for the whole race of mankind.

The doctrine in question is very easily caricatured. But, viewed soberly and candidly, the narrative of Genesis iii., bearing in itself marks which show that it is not to be interpreted with crude literalism, implies profound psychological truths, verifiable as what may be called the natural history of temptation and the entrance of sin into a hitherto innocent breast. The consequences described in Genesis iii. and Romans v., as coming upon the posterity of the first pair, which have been objected to as unjust, do but represent actual

facts in the constitution of the race, which science is continually impressing on our attention more plainly and strongly. What we are learning to call the "solidarity" of the race, for better, for worse, is a fact, not a dogma; and Christianity does but affirm that through the offence of one sin entered into the world, bringing in its train the consequences which moral evil does of a surety bring with it. That there is perfect accord between the early history of man as given in the Bible, and that presented by modern evolutionary theories, it would be futile to pretend. But the discrepancy is not so great as is sometimes asserted. It may be observed—

1. Much of what passes for "science" as to the condition of prehistoric man is only conjecture. Evidence is not forthcoming to prove either the existence of those arboreal apes who are supposed to be man's immediate ancestors, nor that slow development of the genus *Homo* from a savage condition, in which he "moved upwards, working out the beast, and let the ape and tiger die." The earliest stages of human history known to us do not favour this hypothesis; and the conscience of to-day, and the most complete and subtle analysis of the moral evil which stains and darkens our nature, do not confirm this account of the "origin of evil." That the real root of human wrong and trouble is the remains of an ancestral brute-nature, not yet wholly left behind, is a conjecture unproved either by what we know of history or of morals.

2. The doctrine of Christianity on this subject has been sometimes wilfully, but more often unconsciously, misrepresented. Men are not condemned for a trifling fault which is not theirs; but mankind, with its first

progenitor at their head, having taken the evil course of disobedience to the will of God, and a following of the devices and desires of their own hearts, abide, as the evil must do, under the wrath of God, and have to bear the consequences which a righteous Ruler must attach to wrong-doing, till the operation of a higher moral principle brings release. There is no need to minimise or explain away Christian doctrine on this head, though exaggeration in the presentation of it should carefully be guarded against. It is often forgotten that the evil in question is a terrible fact; while all that Christianity as a religion does, is to go some way towards explaining the cause, and the whole way towards the provision of a remedy.

Naturalism for the most part explains away moral evil, either as (*a*) necessary, characteristically belonging to a finite nature; or (*b*) unreal, marking only a stage in the progress of the creature towards an abiding good. A candid examination of human nature and life shows that the former view is inadequate, that there is something out of gear in human nature, far beyond that imperfection which is due to his finitude; while the latter is opposed to the very fundamental principles of ethics, to the definition of moral evil, to the voice of conscience, and the facts of racial degeneration. Certain degrees of "maladjustment" will not account for that degradation of the higher nature of man, which is the riddle of history, the despair of philosophers, and the occasion of the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be said that Christianity has changed her tone under the pressure of modern criticism, and especially that belief in Satan, as a personal evil spirit, is now, by common consent, surrendered. That,

however, is not the case. It may well be that mediæval fancies, which expressed in a crude but effective fashion truths which philosophers would have abstractly propounded in vain, have passed away, as completely as the Miltonic conception of Satan, which gave to the prince of evil heroic proportions and a Manichæan prominence unwarranted by Scripture. It may be said that every age, or, for the matter of that, every country, fashions its own devil. Lucifer differs from Mephistopheles, and both from Belial. But if spiritual views of the universe are justifiable at all, it is more probable than not that there are other than human spirits, some good, some evil; and the measure of contact between spiritual worlds it is beyond our power to estimate. The profoundest experience of earth's truest saints all points to a confirmation of Scripture teaching concerning the existence and power of evil spirits, and the sneer of the worldly sceptic does not count for much in comparison. It is easy for placid citizens in piping times of peace to slight the dangers and hardships attendant on persecution, oppression, and war; but a little experience of what is meant by those easily uttered words changes the whole landscape and alters the whole horizon. And the experience of the tame and commonplace lives of easy-going men and women, from which spiritual heights and depths are alike absent, may make it a natural thing for them to banish from their creed a Satan against whom they have never wrestled, and to ignore the existence of "principalities and powers" whose terrible might they have never encountered, because they have never been valiant enough for the truth to enter into conflict with them. But the phenomena of moral evil in the race at

large, and in the inner conflicts of the holiest men and women, go far to prove the existence of other powers of evil than those actually embodied in the world. A measure of contact between those evil spirits and our own, there is, according to the teaching of Scripture and the confirmation of experience; not to the extent of attributing human evil mainly to their influence, or ridding man of his due responsibility, but enough to show the existence and terrible significance of a great kingdom of evil, of which the forces that subtly assail us form but a part.

It is quite possible, however, to discuss the actual facts of moral evil in human life without reference to these mysterious influences, though, in the opinion of all the saints of history, the description loses in reality and force by the omission. It becomes, then, a question whether Christianity or naturalism best accounts for the facts of evil which are terribly patent to all. Excluding such moralists as virtually deny the existence of moral evil, by denying free will and responsibility, we may refer for a moment to those who deny the heinousness of evil, by representing it as a necessary stage in upward progress. The "ascent of man," be it observed, is not an induction from the known facts of history. History, so far as its pages are open to us, teaches a very different lesson. The doctrine in question is an inference from what some evolutionists think "must have been" the earliest condition of man, viewing him as descended from the animals. But without insisting on this point, and supposing for argument's sake that the field is open for either hypothesis, the Christian view of a "fall" of man does unquestionably run counter to the whole tendency of modern scientific

thought. In justifying the Christian interpretation of life on this head, it may be observed—

1. The doctrine of the Fall, rightly understood, is not gloomy, but hopeful. Christianity in teaching that sin is sin, insists that in the world is that which is not in accordance with the Divine will, and the original conformation of human nature. Once give up that view and the very hope of freedom is gone. It is a veritable doctrine of despair, that all the evil of history is natural, necessary, or desirable for the attainment of better things, and that the hope of humanity lies in its power to work upwards from it.

2. A "fall" does not exclude the possibility of a state higher even than the original level from which man through disobedience fell. Is it possible, as Lessing put it, to "stumble upwards"? In morals, hardly, but the stumble may be overruled by a higher power for the securing of higher attainments, and men may "rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things." Without weakening the sense of sin, we may admit that the serpent was partially justified in his promise, "ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." An increase of knowledge man's disobedience did certainly bring, but not a Divine increase. Progress might have been realised without *guilty* knowledge, though it is proverbially hard to persuade men of the fact. The profligate youth, who is anxious to "see the world" and "know life," cannot be persuaded that his advance in knowledge, which is real, is a descent, not an ascent. The eating of the forbidden fruit, which implies a kind of intellectual advance combined with moral retrogression, may in the history of the race be overruled for good by the introduction of a

higher moral and spiritual dynamic, and so a higher result in the end be secured than was realised by Adam before the Fall, though not higher than he would have attained, had he never sinned.

3. The deep tap-root of evil is never touched, till the perversion of man's relation to God is shown to be the cause of all the miseries that follow in its train. This may easily be verified by an appeal to the facts of human nature and human life. Moral evil does not reside in the bodily nature. Sensuousness is but one kind of evil, and not the worst. Sins of the spirit are the last to be detected and the hardest to cure. Evil does not consist in the circumstances of temptation, though the pressure is sometimes terribly severe, and we may say in current phrase that it was "impossible" to resist. But conscience sweeps away all such excuses, and experience, rightly analysed and understood, proves that the root of the evil lay, not in the environment, but in the perverted will. Again, the real root of moral evil does not lie in what may be called the ill-balanced and discordant elements of our own nature. It is true enough that in man there is this lack of harmony and proportion, which mars even our best achievements; but why is it there, and whence did it come?

4. The only sufficient and abiding answer is found in that philosophical explanation which begins, not with circumstances and conditions, but with spirit and character; that moral explanation which shows that the possibility of sin is found in the possession of freedom, and the reality of sin in the abuse of freedom of the will; and especially in that religious explanation, which points out that man was made to learn and obey

the will of God, and that selfishness, the choice of his own will, and the securing of his own desires as the central principle of action, is the root of all other wrong. That this choice is not always consciously made, as in the case of the child or the savage, does not invalidate the explanation. Not every sinner can give a rationale of his sin. It is probably true that no rationale can be given of the one radically irrational thing in God's universe. But every man can tell, by the testimony of his own conscience, what his wrong-doing is *not*, and by the evidence of his own experience what does *not* avail to put him right; and the evidence, both of conscience and experience, confirms what Christianity teaches on this particular subject in its interpretation of life.

V.

The existence of evil, whether styled natural or moral, in the world, as now constituted, is obvious. Various names may be found for it, various causes assigned for its presence, various remedies devised for its alleviation or removal; but the fact that development, in human life at least, is not normal, steady, progressive, that "there's somewhat in the world amiss," needs no discussion. The attitude assumed by science in this matter differs essentially from that of religion. To some degree this is to be expected, since it depends upon an essential difference between the provinces and the methods of the two fields of knowledge. But a further difference, arising from a transgression—often unconsciously committed—of the limits of these several domains, has accentuated and needlessly embittered controversy between scientific and religious men. Each

has been in danger of assuming that he is in possession of the whole attainable truth upon a complex and mysterious subject, and each has tended to be jealous of the interference of the other. It would be well if both were to begin by a confession of ignorance, then each might be prepared to enlighten the generally acknowledged darkness by rays which would supplement instead of interfering with each other.

No one, surely, should be afraid of using the word "mystery" in this connection. The term is often misapplied and misunderstood. In the New Testament the word μυστηρίον, with its correlative "mystery" in English, does not signify that which is in itself totally incomprehensible. It often means an open secret,—that which is hidden from some, at some times, in some connections, but revealed to others under other conditions. It indicates not that which is unknown or unknowable, but that which is imperfectly known, and sometimes that which must always remain imperfectly known under the inevitable limitations of finite faculties. With regard to evil, its origin, its final issues, and, to a large extent, its nature, are in this sense mysterious. And the controversy which arises in relation to the unknown elements, if not altogether futile,—since the unknown in this case is not entirely unknowable,—may be removed from consideration. The question with which we are now concerned is, whether the existence of evil, as generally acknowledged, is inconsistent with rational belief in a God of righteousness and love, and whether the Christian conception of it, and the means provided for its removal, are warranted by the facts of human life, and their appropriateness and adequacy proved by human history.

The fundamental belief of Christian Theism has again been put upon its trial. The enlargement of the area of knowledge has been made the occasion of a fresh arraignment. But already it is being seen that the new pleas are no more successful than the old; are, indeed, only the old indictments in new shape. It is necessary to distinguish for a moment between "natural" and "moral" evil. The names are not happy, but the distinction drawn is between evil which is not dependent on the human will, and that which, directly or indirectly, results from its exercise. The old dilemma, older than Job and certain to outlast John Stuart Mill, runs that God is either not benevolent, or not almighty, since He has obviously lacked either the will or the power to prevent sin and evil on the earth. But the dilemma is always a dangerous and misleading form of argument. The tacit premiss is, that the prevention of sin and evil, as we know them, is itself an end to be attained *at all costs*, which is a begging of the whole question. And the form of the argument implies that God must lack either goodness or omnipotence, *in our sense of the words*; it being forgotten that a wider knowledge may easily widen our ideas of benevolence, and a more exact knowledge restrict our ideas of omnipotence, as an attribute of a wise and righteous Ruler of the world. The terrible knot of human life is not to be so easily cut by a pair of sharp scissors with opposing blades. More is bound up in it than the logic of the sciolist can determine, and the whole subject must be approached in a spirit to which the light-hearted propounder of a conclusive dilemma is an utter stranger.

Is there such a thing as "natural" evil? Outside the

terrible aberrations of the human will, and the unspeakable confusion and misery it has brought in its train, does evil exist in the universe in such a measure as would warrant virtual Atheism? The question is not to be answered in a breath, and it is to be noted that Christianity, as a religion, does not directly deal with the difficulties it raises. One simple consideration will, however, enable us to place many of them on one side. The phenomena of earthquakes, volcanoes, and many convulsions of inorganic nature are pointed to as elements of disorder and disturbance, as are the phenomena of organic life implied in what is known as the "struggle for existence," in which, whilst the few survive, the many perish. Disease, pain, and death in the animal world; the existence of birds and beasts of prey; the wholesale slaughter which appears to be absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the balance of life in the animate world; the inexorable laws which pitilessly doom to destruction generations of plants and animals, and make of nature not a home of beauty but a charnel-house of ruin—have been repeatedly alleged as conclusive proofs of the cruelty or apathy of the World-Ruler, if a World-Ruler exist at all. J. S. Mill's fierce diatribes against nature are too well known to need quotation, nor does the line of argument need detailed illustration.

But here be it observed that the "pathetic fallacy" unconsciously creeps in. Scientific men denounce anthropomorphism, but here is anthropomorphism of the least excusable kind. It is assumed that ideas drawn from our contemplation of the life of man may be applied without modification to nature around. Moral government can only be exercised over moral

beings. That is not to say that non-moral beings may be handed over to immoral government, or to anarchy, but that, the laws and conditions which exist in the two spheres being different, the character of the rule must be differently estimated. Nature may be neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral. And, in any case, before the principles which determine its order can be rightly questioned, the End in view must be understood. Here our knowledge fails us. That the connection between the life of nature and the life of man is close and intimate cannot be questioned, even by those who hesitate to speak of man as a part of nature. But we are not warranted in saying that man is the End, the final cause, for the sake of which "this goodly frame, the earth, this most excellent canopy, the air," and all the inhabitants of earth and air exist. The picture and the frame fit well together; the artist devised both, and placed the figure in its setting; the connection between the two is close and intimate, and each loses a portion of its meaning if it be removed from contact with the other. But it is dangerous to argue from the colours on the canvas to the fashion of the gilt moulding, or to include the solid wood-work and the delicate painting under the same broad generalisations. Nature cannot be viewed entirely apart from man, nor man entirely apart from nature, but the attempt to find "natural law in the spiritual world" is just as successful, or unsuccessful, as to trace spiritual law in the natural world. Each ends in confusion, yet it does not follow that nature and spirit are opposed, or that no analogy is to be found between the two worlds that are ours, because both are the handiwork of Him to whom both we and they belong.

The question of the existence of "natural evil" must be argued by itself. Christianity neither asserts nor denies the existence of that which is denoted by this objectionable phrase. What Christianity does is to imply the existence of order and beauty in nature, which no one in his senses denies, but to hint, in addition, that all is not as it should be, or was intended to be, in the "creation" which "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." It is represented as being subjected to *ματαιότης*, a certain purposelessness or failing of its full end; but, as being so subjected, in the hope that in due course it shall be delivered from its bondage, realising what now it only struggles after, when the sons of God enter into the liberty of the glory which belongs to them, and that full redemption for which they groan and wait. Such is St. Paul's well-known allusion to the subject in the Epistle to the Romans, but the phraseology of this passage must not be closely pressed into the service of a dogmatic theology which desires to settle questions of physical science. It is a profound utterance; one which contains, as many think, a wealth of meaning concerning the relation between nature and man, the fulness of which will appear one day. But it leaves the groaning of creation still in the region of mystery, and does not explain the new birth to which its long travail tends.

It must not, however, be assumed in the discussion of this question that pain is in itself necessarily an evil. Of pain may be said, what cannot be said of sin, that in a righteous government it may legitimately be a means to a higher end. The time in which we live is one in which sensitiveness to pain has increased in proportion

as sensitiveness to the heinousness of sin has diminished. The callousness of some previous generations in the infliction of physical pain has become to us a thing intolerable, almost incredible; while the famous expression of Newman, "Better for sun and moon to drop from heaven, for earth to fail, and for all the many millions that are on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, than that one soul should commit one single venial sin," appears a paradox only worthy of contempt. But if man assumes to be a moral judge he must be quite sure that he occupies a correct moral standpoint. And the confusion referred to above between the moral and the non-moral spheres, the laws of which present mutual analogies, but are in certain important respects incommensurable, must be avoided here as far as possible.

All sentient organisation must be susceptible of suffering. It is the very condition of its existence and of its enjoyment of happiness. The degree to which suffering may be necessary for its existence, its preservation, and the full development of its powers, is a matter of which it is very difficult to judge. This is one of many points on which it would be well for a little more modesty to be exercised than is usual just now with men who are assured of their perfect competence to judge Providence and condemn the ways of God to men. The existence and even the prevalence of pain in the animal world form no legitimate ground of reproach against its Creator, provided the end be worthy of the cost. The well-being of the individual or the species, the development of faculty, or the establishment of sympathy and solidarity in a race, may account for much. The balance of pleasure and pain

in a purely animal life is one which it is probably impossible for man to strike. He must be almost superhuman so to lift himself above the estimates of pain and pleasure which belong to the race, as neither to err by excess or defect of sympathy in the judgment of such a question.

But passing from animal to human life, the beneficent action of pain, its almost necessity to man in his present condition, is generally recognised. It is not in itself a good, nor can it of itself produce good, but that it must have some place in moral government is questioned by none. Nor are the more thoughtful observers disposed to question that in human life there are certain main lines of distributive justice laid down, which imply moral equity. Butler has sufficiently argued the point, and the very doubts which are raised concerning the action of Providence, or the bold denials of the justice of God, are sufficient to show that there is in the world at least enough to suggest the righteousness of the World-Ruler, though not enough to convince all of His justice or His love.

The functions of pain in human life are many and various. To some extent it is needed, as in lower animals, for the preservation of the individual, serving as a kind of guard or note of alarm warning of the approach of still greater danger. It is further needed in man, even more than in other forms of animal life, for the upbuilding of a race, linked together by invincible bonds of sympathy and fellowship, bound up, as it is, with many of our holiest feelings and most exquisite delights. Here again, how far pain is necessary—if it be necessary—to humanity apart from moral evil, is a question we are not qualified to decide. That at least an ebb and

flow of enjoyment are needed for the development of any sentient organism seems to be implied in that stubborn "nature of things" against which man rebels as arguing an impotent or a cruel deity. But when moral evil has once made its way into a world of beings capable of moral life, pain acts as a supreme and necessary purifier, the beneficent flame which consumes the dross that it may conserve and improve the metal. It acts partly as punishment, partly as discipline; and both these methods of applying it are pursued in relation to man as an individual and as a member of a race. It may operate for the punishment of an individual, or of a society, thereby bringing what might be called "undeserved" punishment upon some members of it. It may be inflicted for the purification of what is unworthy in those who, as sons, deserve chastisement; or it may be gladly endured, as by saints and heroes, for the lessening of pain in others or the improvement and elevation of their character. Quite apart from distinctively Christian teaching, the application of these several principles, in their inter-related complexity, will do much for the moralisation of what is at first sight the unintelligible drama of human history. When we add to this a belief in immortality, and a sure readjustment in the future of the balance of justice which has so long hung awry, sufficient steps have been taken in a theodicy to make the way plain for the specific lessons of Christianity.

VI.

Christianity is a doctrine of Redemption. But it is the redemption of man from *sin* which is contemplated,

not the deliverance of a world from metaphysical evil. Man is in the foreground here, and the light shed upon the "vanity" to which "the creature" is for a time subjected is faint and indirect. If the Christian view of life be true, the evil which mars and desolates this world results from a perversion of the human will, and the only means of restoration is the renewal of that will by the moral and spiritual means implied in the mission of Jesus Christ. We hold that history confirms the Christian doctrine of sin, that no attempt at renewal which has attempted to work from without inwards has succeeded; that regeneration must begin with the individual nature, and spread by the use of spiritual means; that thus and thus only, gradually but surely, will the way be prepared for the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Science and culture have neither initiated nor maintained any such work of renewal, and they are disposed to deny its possibility. "There is no remedy for a bad heart," says Mr. Cotter Morison, "and no substitute for a good one."[1] Here science and religion are diametrically opposed to one another, and the appeal lies obviously to facts. The facts admit of more than one interpretation, because, while Christianity has confessedly done much to purify and raise human life, and can point to many trophies of its power in all countries and in all ages, still after two thousand years its work remains but partially accomplished; and the corruptions which have marred and degraded it have made it impossible to judge what the religion would have achieved, had it retained its pristine purity. An argument of great cogency may indeed be built up from the influence

[1] See Essay VIII. p. 262.

which Christianity has exerted upon individual, social, and national life, in spite of the corruptions which at certain epochs have disgraced Christendom, and which would have been fatal to any religion of less vitality and ethical energy. But we do not press the point at present.

Rather is it needful to ask whether there is anything in the "modern" view of the world which makes the Christian interpretation of history incredible, or whether the searching examination to which the Christian origins have been subjected has not resulted in the demonstration, that no other hypothesis than the Divine mission of Jesus can account for the recognised facts of history. It would not be difficult to construct an argument to show that—once granted a Theistic basis—even upon the evolutionary view of life which is now so prevalent, a doctrine of Incarnation and Atonement is now needful, and demanded by the acknowledged condition of man. We do not for a moment mean that speculation could have anticipated what it pleased God in His own time to reveal; but that, granted a God of righteousness and love, proceeding in the world by evolutionary processes, and bent, as such a God must be, upon the renewal of sinful man, then Incarnation and Atonement, stupendous proofs of love as they are, so far from appearing incredible, have been prepared for until they are seen as topstones of a building which had been long in course of erection, and which demanded some such completion as this. What man is constitutes a claim, a prophecy, almost a pledge, of what Christianity promises he shall be. And the methods employed for his renewal, utterly remote as they were from man's highest imaginings, yet, when they are put in operation, are

seen to commend themselves to reason and to conscience, and, so far from proving a stumbling-block to faith, need only to be understood in order to constitute an irresistible claim for its exercise.

Doubtless the cardinal doctrines of the Christian religion have often been misunderstood, and are easily capable of being misrepresented. Stated baldly and crudely, more than one of them may be to Jews a stumbling-block, and to Greeks foolishness. Nor is it either right or wise to strip Christianity of its characteristic features in order to commend it to what is called the "reason" of the ordinary man. Spiritual truths can only be spiritually discerned; and those who are too proud to learn the alphabet of a language must not be surprised if they cannot understand pages of its literature. But it remains true that the apostles and their faithful followers in all ages have been able "by manifestation of the truth to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," and if evolution as a Divine method in creation and history were proved to-morrow, so far from preventing a spiritually-minded Theist from accepting the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, it may be said in some respects to prepare the way for them.

Is it to be supposed that man as he is is the climax, the appointed τέλος of the history of life on earth? Have the secrets of the ages been explored in order to lead up to this as its consummation—the worship of existing Humanity as the *Grand Etre?* Surely, if in the nebulous fire-mist there was promise and potency of revolving worlds; if in this planet, when formed and cooled and inhabited, there was in the lower forms of life a prospect and a prophecy of a higher life to come,

there is in man, as we see him now, a sure pledge of something better beyond? All theistic evolutionists are persuaded of it; but where are the grounds of hope for such realisation to be found, if not in the doctrine that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and that He is indeed the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world? If there be a God of righteousness and love, what diviner form could Righteous Love Incarnate take than that of the glory which is seen in the face of Jesus Christ? And what means for melting the obdurate hearts of selfish men has ever been dreamed of to be compared with that revelation of ineffable pity and redeeming grace which shines forth from the cross of Calvary? If it implied only the purifying power of sympathetic suffering borne in order to free the sin-stained from evil, experience has proved that no such regenerating energy has been felt in the world before or since. But the cross of Christ means infinitely more than Divine sympathy with suffering. The doctrine that men are to be saved, not by what they do but by what Another has done, has been denounced as immoral and a root and source of immorality. But those who thus interpret the significance of the Cross need to learn the very elements of the Christian religion. The suffering of Christ was indeed vicarious; He did "bear our sins in His own body on the tree"; it is true that "by His stripes we are healed." But Christ is "Another who is not another"; and in His sacrifice for sin lies the very security for the ethical purity which some opponents of Christianity profess themselves so eager to uphold. That no forgiveness is possible without atonement made by the Lord of all Himself, that no redemption of the soul is possible but

at infinite cost, yet the price of it is paid by Him to whom that price was due. That the Son of God Himself should bear our burden even to the uttermost is a doctrine which has been proved to possess a moral and spiritual redeeming power never dreamed of in any system of ethics. And this gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

Arguments of this kind are, indeed, of little avail in laying the foundation of a Christian apologia. They do not and cannot appeal to opponents of Christianity who decline even to admit the presuppositions which are necessary for its acceptance, and appear incapable of understanding any doctrine which implies the supernatural. For these, it is necessary to begin with facts of history, and show how inadequate are the several naturalistic hypotheses which have been devised—each destructive of its predecessors—to "account for" Christ and the spread of Christianity. But all who have learned to believe in a living God will find little difficulty in believing that He is able to manifest Himself beyond nature, as well as in and through nature; while those who have been led to trust in a God of love will find it hard to believe that He would not so manifest Himself when the end to be gained was the redemption of a race.

Yet the "historical Christ," as the current phrase runs, is not sufficient for man's needs; He craves a present Saviour. The need has been anticipated by Christ Himself, and abundantly supplied. "I will not leave you orphans," He said to His disciples; "I will come to you." And that coming, He went on to explain, consists in the abiding presence of His Spirit in the world and especially in the hearts of those who trust and obey Him. Omit

the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from Christianity, and it furnishes no present Saviour. All kinds of substitutes have been devised; some of them, alas, by the Church itself. It is pathetic to see so large a portion of Christendom depending at this moment for a present Saviour upon the perpetual repetition of the miracle of the altar, when what it chiefly needs to realise is the presence of the Spirit, of whom the mass says nothing and Christ says everything. "He shall glorify Me," said the Master; and apart from His presence and teaching and renewing and purifying power, the Christian interpretation of life loses its deepest meaning and the sense of its present power. The demonstration of the Spirit is the only kind of demonstration that is immediately and permanently effective.

Christianity accepts the reproach implied in the Pagan taunt that it is a religion of sorrow. Its central figure is the Man of Sorrows. The initial stage of its working implies a change so great that it is denominated a dying. The followers of this Leader are bidden to deny themselves, and take up their cross daily if they are to be worthy of the name they bear. They believe that they must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God; and, in the future life, those who are next the throne are represented as having come out of great tribulation and washed their robes in blood shed on their behalf. Repellent as all this may be to the easy-going spirit of humanism in all generations, Christians can show good reason for holding that this doctrine of sorrow brings the disciple very near to the secret which lies at the heart of the world's history. Leave this out of Christianity or out of religion, and it loses its mainspring. The Christian is no pessimist, as

we shall shortly show; but a world of sin can never be explained and never be purified by a religion in which the central shrine is not a sanctuary of sorrow. Life out of death, joy out of sorrow, peace out of pain,—these are the phrases which express the inmost truths of the Christian interpretation of life, and by them Christianity may be content to stand or fall. Its view of the condition of man, the needs of man, and the only way in which those needs can be met, makes this teaching to be of its very essence. The conscience of the individual and the experience of the race may be left to determine whether or no in this respect it is justified. The weary and heavy-laden soul, the troubled conscience, the wounded spirit, the discouraged and well-nigh despairing heart, find in Christ what is to be found nowhere else. But, for all this, the message of the Christian herald is a gospel. It is because the note of sorrow sounds so clearly in it that the message is a perpetual evangel. It probes to the quick the wound which other physicians ignore or fail to discover; but it so touches the sore of humanity as to remove the aching smart which philosophers and sages have pronounced incurable. This is a message of joy indeed; but, as regards the life that now is, the conflict predominates and the victory which is promised only begins. It may be that amongst all the orbs this is "the star of suffering." We know the life of none beyond our own, but it may safely be said that wherever there is a world of sin, there should be, must be, a world of sorrow. Where this is also a world of grace, a secret is made known for the vanquishing of sorrow; but the time for complete conquest is not yet, and meanwhile

"Here alone
Is given thee to *suffer* for God's sake.
In other worlds we shall more perfectly
Serve Him and love Him, praise Him, work for Him,
Grow near and nearer Him with all delight;
But then we shall not any more be called
To suffer, which is our appointment here.
. . . . Let us take heed in time
That God may now be glorified in us;
And while we suffer, let us set our souls
To suffer perfectly; since this alone,
The suffering which is this world's special grace,
May here be perfected and left behind."

And so the Christian interpretation of life lays stress upon the cross as the only pathway to the crown. It is pain, but pain transfigured, already passing into deep, ineffable joy, which forms the deepest secret of the Christian's heart. This is the teaching of Him who might well say, "Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow"—any joy like unto my joy—for

"God may have other words for other worlds,
But for this world, the Word of God is Christ."

VII.

The doctrine of a future life, however, forms an integral part of the Christian interpretation of the present. There is no "other-worldliness" in the New Testament. On the other hand, the kind of consideration given by Christ and His apostles to the future proves that they regarded it as continuous with the present, and their spiritual views of life made any sharp severance between the two worlds seem unreal and impossible. The connection between this life and that which is to

come is so close that neither can be understood, except as viewed in the most intimate relation with the other.

A Christian theodicy presupposes a doctrine of immortality. The writers of Job and some of the Psalms were hindered in their faith by the scantiness of the revelation given to them concerning that which lies beyond the grave; the Christian attitude is that of St. Paul, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." Not that virtue is not, as the philosophers say, its own reward; not that, even for a course of threescore years, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" is a safe or satisfactory maxim, and Christian self-denial a piece of fruitless Quixotism. But because the whole life-structure of the Christian is so built upon his hopes of the future; his beliefs, his joys, his plans, his conduct are so bound up with them, that if he is deceived in this regard, his delusion is so utter that no disappointment can be more piteous than his. And, indeed, any "interpretation of life," such as we are now examining, must include, as an integral and essential part of its exposition, some kind of doctrine concerning a future state. If there be none, or none that man may with any confidence expect, if his horizon is to be bounded by the present, it is clear that his whole view of that which lies on the hither shore of time is determined by the virtual exclusion of any prospect of eternity. So it comes to pass that one of the chief objections to the Christian view of the present is its supposed extreme insistence upon certain characteristics of the future state.

It may be readily admitted that in pictures of a world to come popular imagination has outrun respon-

sible teaching; and that all Christian teachers have not been careful to observe the sobriety of the New Testament, or even to understand the fundamental principles of interpretation by which its statements concerning the future life are to be expounded. But it does not follow from this, that the clear utterances of Christ and His apostles are to be explained away, or their strength weakened and diluted, in order to remove what many moderns conceive to be stumbling-blocks in the way of faith. It is dangerous to cut away knots that we find it hard to untie; and the mathematician often finds the unexpected and exceptional elements in his problems lead not to confusion, but to unexpectedly triumphant discoveries. The New Testament does not profess to give such a revelation concerning the future life as many theologians wish to compel it to yield; but, on the other hand, it does speak plainly and clearly on some points, and utters its voice without any feeble concessions to human desires, in a way which shows that it is no cunningly-devised fable of attractive mythology, but a message from the God of truth, delivered whether men hear, or whether they forbear.

The nature of the revelation needs to be borne in mind. Christ, in referring to the future, largely used the language of parable. The parables of the tares, the virgins, the talents, the pounds, the sheep and the goats, and of Dives and Lazarus, are examples of this. The most extended reference to the future state is found in a book essentially symbolical in its language, the Apocalypse. This is stated, not that the significance of such language may be discounted, but that the exegetical principles which apply to all symbolism should be carefully borne in mind. No more impressive,

no more useful form of teaching can be employed to stamp spiritual truth on the hearts, especially of the multitude. "Truth embodied in a tale will enter in at lowliest doors"; and the wisest will find it difficult, when using the abstract philosophical phrases supposed to be dear to them, to find words which will convey spiritual ideas at the same time so adequately and so impressively as the story, the figure, and the symbol. But a delicate hand is necessary in interpreting these, and Scripture does not always furnish a key to its own pictures; especially when truth is to be taught concerning a state of being, the very elements of which it is impossible for us now to conceive; as impossible as for a man born blind to understand the description of colours given to him, except in terms of other sensations. So much it is necessary to say, in order that certain popular views of "heaven" and "hell" may not be identified with the teaching of the New Testament, and that the light shed by Christianity on life beyond the grave should be the clear, white light of revelation alone.

It is natural, however, that there should be intense feeling upon this matter. The question of ultimate destiny is all-important. Perplexities there may be, well-nigh despondency, concerning the present course of human affairs, and the disappointment of cherished human hopes, but these matter little if religion can afford a well-grounded prospect of complete triumph at the last. Christian optimism is a tenable creed, if "after life's fitful fever" we not so much "sleep well," as wake up to a condition in which disease and pain are phantoms of the past, and "the former things are passed away." And it is here that Christianity fails in

some respects to meet man's fond expectations. Triumph indeed there is, beyond the power of words to express, but it is for a portion of mankind only. Caricatures of Christianity say, only for the favoured few; but the description of the "great multitude that no man can number" does not warrant the limitation to a few, and favour is unknown before that august tribunal. "Few there be that find it" is a saying of our Lord's concerning eternal life, which must be carefully considered in the light of its context before it is used to contravene His own words concerning the many from north and south and east and west, who shall sit down in the kingdom of God. One of the questions that is asked in Scripture, and *not* answered in the categorical fashion men desire, is, "Lord, are they few that be saved?"

Man desires that all should be saved, and is disposed to quarrel with any revelation which does not promise this consummation, so devoutly to be wished. He has from time to time, and especially in our own day, endeavoured to wrest the language of Scripture to make it mean what he thinks it ought to mean. The writings of the New Testament are of such an unsystematic character that it is not difficult for many ingenious interpreters to find in them each his own several doctrine. But violence—however unconsciously applied—is needful for this end, and the language of our Lord and of His apostles is too clear to allow of much difference of opinion amongst those who are at the same time candid and faithful. The Universalist can only range the New Testament on his side by ignoring clear statements concerning the fate of the wicked, or by explaining them away. The Annihilationist shapes his whole view of human nature, and the

meaning of immortality, and reconstructs the whole interpretation of the words "life" and "death," in order to be able to prove that somewhere in the far future the wicked will be no more. With the hopes and desires which prompt these persistent endeavours, it is easy to sympathise; but it is impossible to approve the exegesis by which either theory is supported. Granted that in some ages of the Christian Church dogmatism on the subject of the future condition of the finally impenitent has been excessive, and that it is impossible for us to lift the veil which after the Last Judgment hides the lost from our view, it remains true that Scripture warrants neither the hope that they will ultimately be restored to righteousness, nor the assurance that their existence will sooner or later terminate. Scripture neither reveals to us the origin nor the ultimate issues of evil, and it does not definitely promise that the morning of that fair day shall ever dawn when there shall be no more evil, as there is no more curse.

An ultimate dualism in the universe is unthinkable. It does not therefore follow that we are at liberty to fashion our own reconciliation between conceivable alternatives. The resolution of the antinomy may well be beyond the scope of our present powers, and he is a rash man who seeks to force Scripture to proclaim his own hopes of the way in which that prospect will be realised. It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. It is expected of heralds that they be loyal to the commission with which they are intrusted. And no Christian minister is at liberty to hold out hopes of restoration in a future life which his Master has not expressly

warranted, nor a prospect of extinction of evil which Scripture has not definitely declared. The elements in this terrible problem are beyond our ken. We know too little of the nature of evil, the power of the human will, and the limits which the Almighty has laid down for Himself in bringing free, self-determining agents into existence, to warrant us in saying that He *must* either restore the disobedient to allegiance or take from them a being which they will not employ in harmony with His perfect will. "Lord, I exercise not myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me," said the Psalmist; and there is surely a becoming modesty which refrains from pronouncing on some questions, on this side of the great Judgment-seat.

Yet, to the reverent mind, an ultimate irresolvable dualism is not the only alternative to Universalism or Annihilationism. One of the fundamental teachings of Scripture is, that the Judge of all is the Son of Man. God is the Judge of all, but the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. Surely it is not too much for man to leave those ultimate issues, the very contemplation of which makes the heart to shudder and the brain to reel, with the Father God and the Saviour Christ. We hope, we crave, we cry with passionate longing, that this or that goal may be attained in the future, and it seems to us inconceivable that any way but our own towards its accomplishment can be right or good. Yet "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" All things for all men, as well as for all Christians, that the Father can give and that can be given in and through the Son, who, because no lesser gift could avail, gave Himself

to shame and suffering and death on our behalf. He "shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied," says the prophet; may not that which satisfies Him be considered as possibly sufficient to satisfy—save the mark!—the philanthropic anxieties of men who have themselves hardly yet awoke to the meaning of sin and the postulates of salvation? Some men are ready enough to pronounce concerning what was and what was not necessary in the Divine economy for that great wonder to take place—that men should be freely forgiven without the slightest impairment of the eternal law of righteousness. The same confident teachers are as ready to pronounce concerning what must be in the far future if Divine righteousness and love are to find their fit ultimate issue. But it is just possible that their line is not long enough to sound the depths of this ocean, and that the issues of all this sad and difficult life of ours are safe in the pierced hands of Him who gave Himself to the uttermost that man might to the uttermost be saved.

An ultimate dualism is not in accordance with Scripture teaching. There is a class of passages in the New Testament which must not be slighted because it is not easy to say precisely *how* they may be reconciled with passages which describe the ultimate fate of the impenitent. What is clear is, that they presage an ultimate harmony, a reconciliation or summing up of all things in Christ, whether in heaven, on earth, or under the earth; the bowing of every knee, willing or unwilling, to Him; and the delivery of the accomplished mediatorial kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. How that can be, it is not for eyes yet dim with ignorance, and dimmer still with sin, to perceive.

How "heaven and earth *and hell* proclaim God sitteth on the throne and ruleth all things well"; how Dante could find it written on the very gate of the Inferno,

> "Divine Omnipotence created me,
> The highest wisdom *and the primal Love*,"

may well pass man's power to explain. But that the final harmony shall take up into itself all conceivable discords, and resolve them in a fashion now unimaginable; that Christ shall be King in all worlds, and that a God of flawless righteousness and eternal love shall at last be all in all, is the final note of the Christian interpretation of life.

II.

THE GREAT ENIGMA AND ITS ANSWER.

HEINRICH HEINE, in his striking poem "Die Nord See," represents a young man standing on the sea-shore, calling in vain to Nature around to solve for him the riddle of Life. *Das qualvoll uralte Räthsel* haunts him—the old, old riddle, so fraught with pain and torment. "What is the meaning of man's life, whence comes he, whither is he going, and Who dwells up above there, among the golden stars?" he asks in vain the waves, the wind, the clouds, the stars; and with the echoes of these questions in his ears the poet characteristically adds, *Und ein Narr wartet auf Antwort*—"Only a fool awaits an answer." It is quite true that the majority of mankind do not wait for an answer, and but seldom ask the question. Perhaps they are to be envied rather than blamed. To perform the duties of the day without asking why they are duties, or what they will lead to on the morrow; to take life as it is without perplexing inquiries as to how? and why? and to what end? To "take short views," as Sydney Smith advised, and shallow views, as the unintended but inevitable consequence,—this forms an easy, comfortable, and it may prove to be a by no means ineffective working philosophy. Happy, and not of necessity foolish or careless, they

> "Whose minds have never bent to scrutinise
> Into the maddening riddle of the Root
> Shell within shell—dream folded over dream."

To many, however, the butterfly view of life is impossible. The Sphinx presses them with questions to which they feel bound to find answers for themselves. In some moods it seems easy to find a satisfactory solution of the problems of life, in others impossible. A man who is constantly peering into darkness, faintly illumined here and there, will often be bewildered, and hardly know what he does or does not see. In the striking *Reminiscences of Lord Tennyson*, published by Mr. Knowles, the poet is said to have "formulated once and quite deliberately his own religious creed in these words: '*There is a Something that watches over us: and our individuality endures. That's my faith, and that's all my faith.*' This he said with such a calm emphasis that I wrote it down, with the date, exactly and at once." Tennyson's poems at large illustrate, and our knowledge of our own nature would teach us, that such separate utterances are not to be hastily taken as the deliberate enunciation of a permanent creed. They are the expression of a mood, perhaps a recurring mood—no more. They are the utterance of one who is tormented by the Great Enigma, and who does not believe that only a fool expects an answer to it. For, on another occasion, "to one who said, 'My dearest object in life, when at my best, is to leave the world, by however little, better than I found it—what is yours?' He answered, '*My greatest wish is to have a clearer vision of God.*'"

In the generation in which our lot is cast the number of those who despair of an answer to the deepest

questions concerning the meaning of life is increasingly great. The current answers of the Christian religion have, for one reason or another, failed to satisfy many. Some think those answers insufficient, others incredible, others too good to be true. Some would accept them if they could, others care little about the matter, others reject them—or what they think to be Christian solutions—with something of a passionate scorn. Mr. W. R. Greg's *Enigmas of Life*, originally published in 1872, has passed through eighteen editions, and few, we suppose, will deny that the large sale of *Robert Elsmere* was due, not mainly to its undoubted ability, but to its characteristic handling of the question, Is current Christianity a true and satisfactory solution of the deep problems of life? It is not that ours is a peculiarly sceptical age. The positive teaching of scepticism, such as there is, finds little favour. Mrs. Humphry Ward has few disciples. Mr. Frederic Harrison delivers his New Year oration to a handful of undistinguished followers in Fetter Lane. When Mr. Robert Buchanan raves against the Christian religion as a gigantic failure, we do not find that he has anything better to propound; and the interest excited by his diatribes indicates the number, not of those who deny, but of those who question, the sufficiency of the Christian answer to the perennial riddle of life. The time seems far away when it was a matter of course in well-trained, intelligent families to put the first question of the *Shorter Catechism*, "What is the chief end of man?" and to receive the unhesitating answer, "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever."

We cannot be surprised, therefore, whem Mr. W. S.

Lilly, whose ability as a fresh and vigorous writer in periodical literature is well known, finds it worth his while to address an *argumentum ad hominem* [1] to a class of readers outside the Christian pale, and enter into "an inquiry, from their point of view, into the tenableness of the religion which for more than a thousand years has supplied the foremost nations of the world with an answer to the Great Enigma of human existence." He writes for those "who find themselves unable to employ the old theological symbols." Himself a devout Roman Catholic, he uses none of the arguments characteristic of his own Church. Neither does he for the most part plead as a Christian. He goes somewhat out of his way to pay a not undeserved compliment to the Church of England, echoing Newman's description of it as "a serviceable breakwater" against impiety and infidelity in this country. He equally strains a point here and there to utter an unworthy sneer against Nonconformists, the "brotherhood of Chadband and Stiggins," as he calls them; a vulgarity which shows that even Mr. Lilly's omniscience does not include any real acquaintance with English Nonconformity, representing, as it does, and not unworthily, fully half of the religious life of this country. But Mr. Lilly, for the most part, has nothing to say concerning questions which divide Christians as such, and only in the last few pages of his book does he touch in general terms upon the Christian answer to the great questions propounded. He is mainly concerned with canvassing the claims of certain other answers, alternatives of greater or less plausibility, which some wise men of the day prefer to Christianity. He rapidly reviews

[1] *The Great Enigma*, by W. S. Lilly, 1892.

Atheism, Agnosticism (critical and scientific), and unfolds the scope of Rational Theism and Mysticism, before approaching what he calls "the Christian Synthesis." This rapid survey of great questions has much to recommend it. While it must necessarily be superficial, it gives a bird's-eye view of alternative theories, which places the contrast between them and their several claims on our credence in the strongest light. Mr. Lilly's pen is facile and dexterous. He knows how to touch important topics lightly, but not triflingly. His arguments are not too ponderous, while they are sufficiently thoughtful and thorough. His pages are brightened with numerous quotations, drawn from the most various sources, and his own sentences are crisp and epigrammatic enough to lose little by comparison. In days when quite as much depends upon the literary skill and force with which an argument is presented as upon its own intrinsic weight, it may be hoped that Mr. Lilly's volume will find an audience which would not listen to the pleadings of professional orthodoxy. Both orthodox and heterodox, however, may enjoy and profit by this timely discussion of themes which never lose their interest or importance.

Mr. Lilly's point of view is metaphysical. He does not enter upon the riddle of life as it presents itself to most people, who take for granted the existence of a God, but ask in vain for the meaning of pain and sorrow, who are perplexed by the apparent triumph of evil, whose hearts are sore with a *Weltschmerz* that cannot be assuaged. The continued popularity of Mr. W. R. Greg's books shows that he, at least, could put his finger upon the ache, which is something; and to touch it delicately and with sympathy and insight is

next best to a cure. His book is too well known to need description. His point of view is sufficiently indicated by his frank statement of certain patent and pressing enigmas, and his refusal to "stimulate content with official answers at once inadequate and consciously untrue." As to the rest:

"Of the dark riddles and incomprehensible anomalies, and strange perplexities of which life is full, some very few we can unravel; of others we can discern just enough to guess at the solution. The deepest and the saddest must ever remain to try our faith and to grieve our hearts. We see enough to make us believe there *is* a solution, and that that solution is such as will accord with the serene perfections of the Godhead. We have light enough to walk by, to tread the few steps that lie immediately before us; we need not then murmur, or despair, or doubt, because we cannot see our way through the thick forest, and to the end of the long journey. Soldiers must often be contented to fight their appointed battle without insisting on understanding the whole plan of the campaign." [1]

To the Christian philosopher life is not an enigma, but a gospel. Mr. Greg's book is a long pathetic wail, touching the heart with sympathetic tremors; but a Christian writer like Bishop Westcott strikes a nobler lyre, with more assured touch, and to a more manly, stirring strain. Not that he does not perceive the existence of unanswered questions, which a man must be dull as the dumb, driven cattle if he has not asked himself again and again. The Bishop of Durham is no superficial optimist, any more than he is a "half-believer of a casual creed," or a mere professional advocate of a doctrine he is bound by his position to maintain. It is impossible to read many pages of his writings without perceiving that he knows well enough

[1] *Enigmas of Life*, 1891, pp. 208, 209.

that "other side" without a full (we had almost said a sympathetic) knowledge of which it is of little use for a man to preach Christianity to certain classes to-day. The first chapter in his *Gospel of Life*—one of his later works, and in some respects the most instructive—is entitled "The Problems of Life." With these he begins, as one who knows he will thus best gain a hearing, best meet the wistful, half-unconscious gropings, the "obstinate questionings,' the "blank misgivings," which he is specially desirous to meet and satisfy. He urges next the pressing need of dealing with these problems, instead of indulging in the easy and cowardly policy of giving them the go-by, sketching out with great skill the conditions under which a solution of them must be sought. Bishop Westcott then passes in review within brief compass, as only a master of the subject can, the solutions offered by pre-Christian nations, and thus prepares the way for a statement of the claims of Christianity to do what others have failed in attempting. This bald outline gives no idea of the combined delicacy and force of the Bishop's presentation of his case. But it would be difficult, within the compass of a few pages, to give a statement more clearly and convincingly of the claims of Christianity, to give a sufficient and satisfying answer to "the great enigma," than is furnished in the last two chapters of *The Gospel of Life*.

The publication of such books side by side is a significant sign of the times in which we live, and no thoughtful man can read them singly, or in connection with one another, without finding his mind teem with suggestive thoughts, for many of which he probably could hardly find utterance. We propose only to

show how strong an argument for the truth of the Christian religion may be sketched out, only on the lines of its superior ability to grapple with the problems and solve the enigmas of human life.

The theories of the universe, other than Theism and Christianity, which profess to answer the momentous questions, "What am I? Whence am I? And for what end found here? What is the meaning of human life, and what are the means by which the true meaning of life is to be realised?" are numerous enough. Yet in practice, and for the purposes of argument, they may be reduced to very few. Mr. Lilly says that in ultimate analysis they are two—Atheism and Agnosticism; and one might add, without exaggeration, that in certain aspects these two are one. Positivism, Materialism, Pessimism, Secularism are distinct enough as forms of thought, and it would be altogether unfair for the historian of opinion to identify them. Yet, as theories of the universe and in their practical results, they have so much in common that a critic is justified in not giving to them separate consideration. It is not so clear, however, at first that this is the case with Pantheism. This most subtle of antitheistic theories, the "Proteus of beliefs," has fascinated deep thinkers like Spinoza and light-hearted sceptics like Renan in the West; while in the East it has formed the basis of the creed of millions for long centuries together. The grounds on which Mr. Lilly declines to give it separate consideration are the following:—

"What is often called Pantheism is merely the presentation—the one-sided presentation, it may be—of the great Theistic verity, too often ignored, upon which Plato insisted when he taught

the men of Athens, 'All things are full of divinity, full of soul,' which St. Paul recalled to them when he declared on Areopagus, 'In Him we live and move and have our being' . . . Pantheism . . . will be found rather a term than a terminus of human thought, its ultimate resolution being the cancellation of the Theistic idea. . . . To deify the totality of things is to annihilate Deity, for it empties the Divine Noumenon of the elements of personality and morality; while it is no answer to the great enigma wherewith we are concerned. To call the world God, as Schopenhauer has well observed, is not to explain it; it remains a riddle under the one name, as under the other."

The position taken up, accordingly, is that in good logic there are only two answers, besides Theism, to the great enigma—Atheism and Agnosticism. By Atheism is meant the dogmatic denial of God; and by Agnosticism, the mental attitude of doubt, suspense of judgment, or nescience concerning Him. Agnosticism may be either Critical or Negative; the former "maintains that we cannot know whether or no a Divine Noumenon exists"; the latter "asserts His existence, but denies that He can be known." We are far from denying the reality or importance of these distinctions. A wide gulf separates M. Monteil, whose *Catéchisme de Libre Penseur* is chosen by Mr. Lilly as a typical representation of dogmatic Atheism, from Mr. Herbert Spencer, who represents scientific Agnosticism. Yet it would not be unfair for the purposes of practical comparison to class them together, on the ground that in effect the man who categorically denies that there is a God is not so very far removed from the man who allows that there may be, or thinks that there is one, but who asserts in the same breath that no man can know anything whatever about Him. And, for another reason, we might be justified in disregarding the

(theoretically important) distinction between the Agnostic and the dogmatic Atheist, namely, that the former shade of belief is now the one adopted by an immensely large proportion, in this country at least, of thinkers who decline to accept Theism. Agnosticism is a convenient philosophical loose cloak, which covers all kinds of heterogeneous garments of belief worn underneath it; it is a wide-open tent, under which a multitude of curiously-assorted thinkers gather to shelter themselves from storms and showers. It commits to so little—it relieves of so much. To say that there is, or that there may be, an inscrutable Power behind all phenomena, provided at the same time it be stipulated that we cannot possibly predicate anything concerning it, and that no man by any searching can find out anything more than it exists—if indeed it does exist—is not drawing very largely upon the bank of philosophy or dogma, and forms a creed which certainly does not pledge its holder to any alarmingly definite views of the constitution of the universe.

As an answer to the great Enigma it is as candid and complete an acknowledgment of failure as one can well conceive. And yet, for one reason or another, it forms to-day the chief alternative to Christian Theism. Most of the thinkers of the western world who deal with these great questions of fundamental speculation are either Theists (mainly Christian) or Agnostics; in other words, most men who have paid attention to the subject in our western thought either accept the theistic solution of the riddle of life, or give it up altogether. That is an instructive little story told by Dr. Martineau, in the preface to his *Study of Religion*,

concerning a certain address of Professor Fiske of Harvard, on the Destiny of Man. An English friend listened to a report of the address with all patience till it appeared that the Professor found in the psychical evolution of man an intimation of individual immortality. *Then* he broke in with the exclamation, "What? John Fiske say that? Well, it only proves what I have always maintained, that you cannot make the slightest concession to metaphysics without ending in a theology!" This is equivalent, as Dr. Martineau immediately points out, to the naïve confession, "If once you allow yourself to think about the origin and the end of things, you will have to believe in a God and immortality." Or, as for our purpose we might put it, the only way of dealing with the Great Enigma is to accept the theistic solution, or give it up as insoluble.

It must not be thought from this very "short and easy method" of dealing with a perennial problem that we have any desire to beg the question in favour of Theism or Christianity. The points at issue must be carefully argued out at the proper time and place. We only think ourselves entitled to point out the tendency there is towards simplification of the issues when we look not at theory, but at practice; and we are justified in drawing a moral from the rapid spread of Agnosticism—the very name of which is hardly thirty years old—and concluding that this particular method of asserting that "l'idée de Dieu manque d'actualité" may, without unfairness, be taken as *the* alternative to the theistic theory of the origin and history of the universe. Dogmatic Atheism is often best encountered by an unvarnished statement of its

creed. Mr. Lilly rightly says that for the most typical examples of it in our day we must go to France, and he chooses, to illustrate the character of such Atheism, a certain catechism which forms a very useful *reductio ad absurdum* of atheistic dogmatism. A specimen or two must suffice, abbreviated in quotation:—

"What is God?—God is an expression. What is the exact value of this expression?—Nature. What definition can you give of Nature?—It is the material world, and *all* is matter. . . . Do you believe in a Supreme Being?—I only believe what my reason permits me to believe, and my reason refuses to admit the principle of the government of Nature by any being whatsoever. I am persuaded that Nature always has been, is, and always will be, republican, and consequently well fitted to govern herself. . . . There is no first cause, then?—No; for all that we cannot prove scientifically has no existence, and may be denied until proof of the contrary. . . . Again, God is a spectre invented by priests to frighten timid minds, in order that these latter may cast themselves into their arms and endure more easily their domination."

No wonder that men prefer to this blasphemous nonsense the modest creed which says, "I do not know." M. Renan is classed by Mr. Lilly with those who take shelter under the Agnostic cloak—Renan, who set himself to smile away Christianity, to whom Jesus Christ is a charming dreamer, and whose favourite attitude in religious argument is that of a genial *badinage*. Renan, who, as Mr. Lilly puts it, may be considered to have spoken for himself in the words of Ganeo in the *Prêtre de Némi*: "Jouissons, mon pauvre ami, du monde tel qu'il s'est fait. Ce n'est pas une œuvre sérieuse; c'est une farce, l'œuvre d'un demiurge jovial. La gaieté est la seule théologie de cette grande farce." Not take the world and life seriously! One seems to hear thunder-

ing down on such contemptible trifling the indignant rebuke of a book which, if it come far short of Christianity, or even of Judaism, yet has moral seriousness enough to scorn "philosophers" like Renan. It is in the Koran that we read, "God said, Heaven and earth and all between them, think ye they were created in jest, and that all shall not return to ME?" It is not a great triumph of the highest civilisation of Paris, the flower of modern civilisation, if its contribution to the solution of the Great Enigma is to meet it—with a laugh!

But men who stand at the very antipodes from M. Renan in the seriousness with which they look out upon life, are found repeating a similar creed to his concerning the impossibility of answering the questions, Why? Whence? and Whither? Mr. Herbert Spencer lays it down as the foundation-stone of his philosophy that "the Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." Or, as Mr. Lilly quite fairly puts it—

"Mr. Spencer's theory may be shortly and accurately described as an attempt to find the solution of the problem of the universe in a sole law—the persistence of force under multiform transformations. Physical forces, vital forces, mental forces, social forces, are all only different manifestations of the self-same force. Cosmology, biology, psychology, sociology, ethics—all are to be explained by the persistence, under various modifications, of that manifestation of The Unknowable. Nature is merely a vast sphere, in which it works eternally, bringing to life, bringing to death, integrating and disintegrating everywhere throughout what the Buddhists call 'the whirlpool of existence,' always repeating the same monotonous, never-ending process. Evolution, equilibrium, dissolution—that is the brief epitome of the career whether of a star or of a worm. The phenomena of human life, of human history, like the phenomena of astronomy, of geology,

of physiology, are, in Mr. Spencer's philosophy, nothing but metamorphoses of the one dynamic principle at different stages of intensity, infinitely varied combinations of the same elements."

And this Force, this all-pervasive Dynamic Principle, the one thing which abides amidst the waste and welter of worlds, is and must remain to us for ever inscrutable. Of its character, if it have one, its tendency, if there be one, we—infinitesimal and utterly insignificant atoms of being—can know nothing. Verily, if man had set himself to answer an enigma by an utterance even more enigmatical, he could hardly have posed the Sphinx herself by a more mysterious answer than this.

But Mr. W. R. Greg was a Theist and a man of fine and high type of character. He truly believed in God, and that with no abstract theoretical belief. Yet—as we hold, because he stopped short of Christianity—he too felt compelled to write in such a strain as the following:—

"We must conclude that the problem of Man's Wherefore, Whence, and Whither, was meant to be insoluble. When we reflect upon the number of consummate intellects, gifted with every variety of mental endowment and rich in every moral excellence which gives clearness to the vision and depth to the spiritual intuition, who age after age have exhausted thought in fruitless efforts to discern the word of the Great Enigma, it seems idle to fancy that we can be more fortunate than they. Centuries have added scarcely one new fact to the materials on which reason has to work, nor perfected a single one of the faculties by which that work is to be done. We possess scarcely a single item of knowledge of divine or of human nature which was not as familiar to Plato and to Job as to ourselves; assuredly we have no profounder poetic insight than the one, no finer philosophic instrument than the other. What baffled them may well baffle us also." [1]

[1] *Enigmas of Life*, p. 208.

It is unnecessary to describe in detail the arguments with which Mr. Lilly meets the contentions of modern Agnosticism, especially as represented by Mr. Herbert Spencer. It is the less necessary for us to do so, as the reasoning is avowedly negative in character, Mr. Lilly's aim being merely to prove that "there is nothing irrational, and therefore immoral, in accepting the Christian synthesis as affording the best answer to the enigma." This seems elementary work enough, as if it should be hardly needful in this year of grace to establish the position that there is nothing fundamentally "irrational, and therefore immoral," in being a Christian. It is, however, unfortunately necessary that it should be done, and though Mr. Spencer's weaknesses and inconsistencies as a philosopher have been pointed out often enough before, it is perhaps well that Mr. Lilly should do the same again in a work which is more likely to reach the class for whom he specially writes, than a formal theological treatise. The fundamental error lies in Mr. Spencer's theory of the Relativity of Knowledge. Once accept that, and the unknowability of the supreme object of knowledge follows readily enough. But Mr. Lilly's arguments, able as they are, carry us but a little way, and by no means present the case for Christianity as it is desirable it should be presented. Moreover, the brief description of the Christian religion given in a few closing pages of his book is meagre and inadequate. It is no doubt difficult to summarise the teaching of Christianity in brief compass, but we take leave to doubt whether "the baptismal formula, the acceptance of which has from the first been required as a condition of admission into the Christian society," is the best for the purpose.

Further, Mr. Lilly's exposition reads to us cold and unattractive, and it fails altogether to set forth the claims of Christianity upon the allegiance of men founded upon its ability (within certain recognised limits) to solve the Great Enigma. It was quite open to Mr. Lilly to choose his subject, and to confine himself to clearing the ground and preparing the way for a positive exposition of Christian truth. But the apologist who deliberately confines himself to negatives is likely to fail where he most desires to succeed, and the very title of Mr. Lilly's book leads us to expect a more satisfactory answer to the riddle of human life than he attempts to give.

The essential failure of Agnosticism as a creed cannot be shown by the cleverest dialectic. To the greater number of its professed adherents it is not a creed, but a refuge—a *dernier ressort* of perplexed inquiry and disappointed hope. When such artillery as Mr. Lilly has employed upon Mr. Spencer's philosophy has done its work, the real work of one who would win an Agnostic to a better mind is only beginning. As a matter of fact, every attempt to explain the Ultimates in human life is surrounded with its own difficulties. No demonstration of the existence of God is possible, whatever line or lines of proof we followed; objections cannot be silenced, and inexplicable difficulties—partly physical, partly metaphysical, partly moral, partly religious—remain. Round the subject of the personality of the Divine Being—an essential point with the Theist—all kinds of controversies cluster, which cannot be ended, even by victorious argument. There remain a thousand "And yets," which are sure to make themselves heard, and to start again into activity when

argument is over, like a crowd of buzzing insects when the hand which was lifted to drive them away drops again to the side. As the believer is open to be disturbed by the spectres of unbelief, so the unbeliever finds belief "shake him by fits," and keep him from resting undisturbed in his easy chair of Agnosticism—

> "Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
> A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
> A chorus-ending from Euripides—
> And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears,
> As old and new at once as Nature's self,
> To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
> Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring
> Round the ancient idol, on his base again:
> The grand Perhaps!"

The mystery which surrounds our lives must not induce in us either intellectual sluggishness or spiritual cowardice. It must be seen that it is a temptation, not an inspiration, to strive to banish the thought of the mystery from our minds, in the vain endeavour to give ourselves the more earnestly to practical duties. To seek to do so, as the Bishop of Durham has shown, is "to impoverish our whole existence." These mysteries "form the solemn background of all experience; and the exclusion of every religious theory from our view of life will not in fact make life plain and intelligible. On the contrary, the fuller apprehension of the character of the mysteries which necessarily attend our being, impels us more forcibly to seek for some solution of the practical problems which they present, for such a solution as religion claims to bring." It seems not only an easy, but a harmless way of avoiding the stings and pricks of these great life-questions to say, There is

no answer obtainable; *that* riddle is best given up, in order that the energy hitherto spent upon the impossible may be conserved for problems at once more manageable and more urgent. But it is a mistake and may be a fatal one. As Bishop Westcott impressively says:—

"If we turn aside from a reverent contemplation of the mysteries of life; if we refuse to throw upon them the light which we can gather; if we make no effort to realise their ennobling magnificence, because we suppose, for the most part falsely, that their grandeur has no practical significance, we leave undone that which, according to our opportunities, we are bound to do. We take to ourselves a mutilated character. We suffer one great part of ourselves to remain undisciplined, unstrengthened, unused, which (as we may reasonably believe), if not on each, yet in some larger field of being, will require for the fulfilment of its office the results of that exercise which our present conditions are fitted to supply."[1]

The Agnostic not only stunts his spiritual growth, but he restricts and impoverishes his practical energies even in this life. No part of our nature can be allowed to lie in atrophy without the rest suffering proportionately. The apologist of Christianity, therefore, who would do his work completely, must not rest satisfied with the intellectual demolition of scientific Agnosticism. He must press upon the man who is tempted to take refuge in it from haunting and apparently insoluble riddles, that such an attitude is indefensible, morally and spiritually as well as intellectually, and that we are bound to press forward to the solution—partial it may be at best—which is opened up for us in Christianity.

It is needful, however, from the beginning to understand why the answer of Christianity is necessarily

[1] *Gospel of Life*, p. 64.

partial, and within what limits and under what conditions the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ undertakes to contribute to the solution of the enigma. Harm has often been done to religion by its own advocates and defenders, and not least when, through a mistaken zeal, they have undertaken more on its behalf than they have been able to carry out. Christianity has not originated either the antinomies or the evils of our present life, and it does not undertake fully to explain either. The wise Christian professes a certain "Agnosticism" of his own. He has learned the lesson of the old Rabbi: "Teach thy tongue to say, I do not know." The confident dogmatism of some Christians, who undertake to explain the nature of God, the significance of evil, the mystery of pain, and the ultimate issues of the internecine conflict between the powers of light and darkness, by repeating a few ecclesiastical formulas, is sure to produce a recoil to the other extreme. A clergyman, "an ornament of the University of Cambridge," is mentioned by Mr. Lilly as having read on one occasion the Athanasian Creed in his college chapel. When the service was over a friend said: "Now, do you really believe in the Deity about whom we have so positively asserted so much?" "Well," he replied, "perhaps there may be a Kind of a Something." It is no disparagement of the venerable theological formulary referred to to say that, as sometimes inculcated and applied, it is likely to alienate men from a real belief in the living God, and drive them to assert, with Mr. Spencer, that we can only know "a Kind of a Something," an inscrutable Power which is the cause of all phenomena, but the essence of which escapes us.

In every department of knowledge there are conditions under which alone knowledge is obtainable, and that knowledge is compassed with limitations which belong to the very nature of the case. Nowhere is it more necessary to remember this than in theology, and it is vain to ask questions of the Christian Revelation which it does not profess to answer. Our investigations thus far have brought us to the conclusion that man cannot "by searching find out God," that we cannot obtain any adequate knowledge of Him by an examination of ourselves or of Nature. That is the meaning of the prevalence of Agnosticism. But in approaching the Christian revelation, it must be borne in mind, as Butler urged long ago, that we cannot judge *à priori* what a revelation from God is likely to be, how much or how little it ought to contain, nor can we manipulate at will the materials of this revelation. As Butler's successor of to-day expresses it:—

"We cannot command at our pleasure adequate sources of information. Experiment is capable only of rare application to the complicated phenomena of life, and it can have no place in regard to the will of an Infinite Being. If, then, we are to know God, He must in His own way make Himself known to us, and we on our part must be able to recognise and give a personal welcome to the revelation. . . . It follows, therefore, that if a revelation be given to man, it must also come to him through life. It will be addressed, that is, to the whole man, and not to a part of man, as (for example) to the intellect or to the affections. It will, in other words, be presented in facts, and not in words only. Man will learn to know more and more of God—and this is the teaching of history and experience—not by purely intellectual processes, but by intercourse with Him, by listening to His voice, and interpreting the signs which He gives of His presence and His will."[1]

[1] *Gospel of Life*, pp. 78, 79.

Such is the nature of the Christian Revelation. It is not a philosophy, not a collection of scientific laws, not a code of ethics, though Christian theology may vindicate its position as a genuine science, the truest philosophy and the fount of the purest ethics the world has ever known. But the revelation is embodied in a series of facts of human history. This remarkable series of facts, culminating in the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, and preparing the way for a still more remarkable series of facts to follow, contains the substance of the Christian revelation, and from them emanates the light it has to shed on the riddle of human life. It by no means professes to answer all questions, solve all problems. But these facts, with the interpretation which a wise and divinely instructed Christian theology puts upon them, constitute the contribution of Christianity to the solution of the Great Enigma. The question of questions for this generation is: Is this contribution *the* solution which the foremost nations of the world have hitherto considered it to be, or is it not? "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another?"

Bishop Barry, in his Bampton Lectures, has, we think, very truly said that the issue in this great controversy is rapidly narrowing. Biblical criticism is disposing of some of the theories hitherto held concerning the origin of Christianity as altogether untenable. He holds that there are but two alternatives possible, either the facts of Christ's Life, Death, and Resurrection, as they are recorded in the Gospels, are "a conscious legend," or they are true. Dishonest fabrication is out of the question, so also is myth or legend unconsciously fashioned round the original facts.

The horns of the dilemma, he considers, are as clearly defined as they are sharp, and men must choose between them.[1] Without following Dr. Barry precisely in his mode of putting the question, we should be disposed to agree with him that the issues for educated men in this country are so far narrowed down that the choice lies between Agnosticism and Christianity, according to whether a man does or does not believe that the historical evidence for certain facts is sufficient to warrant a rational belief in them. It is allowed on many hands that the Christian religion contains so much that is inspiring, ennobling, and purifying, that, if true, it may well be accounted the best—indeed, the only—solution of the Great Enigma of humanity.

The light which is shed by Christianity on the true cause of the evils and sorrows of human life, the revelation it unfolds of a God of Love, and the way in which He regards a world of sinners, the method of deliverance which Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, has Himself opened up, the lofty standard of life inculcated, and the moral dynamic afforded by Christianity, its promulgation of a Gospel of love, and the hopes it holds out of the ultimate realisation of its own high ideals,—these and other features of the one truly universal religion warrant us in claiming this unique place for the Christian religion. But that we may not seem to be dogmatising in this matter, we may quote a recent utterance of one who is a philosopher, not a divine. Professor Edward Caird says, in his Gifford Lectures on the *Evolution of Religion*:—

[1] *Some Lights of Science upon the Faith*, p. 250. See also pp. 292 and 294.

"The infinite pitifulness of Jesus to the sorrows and evils of humanity, his absolute confidence in the possibility, and even the necessity of their being remedied, and the way in which he bases his confidence on the love of God to man, and on his own unity as man with God—these, taken together, make up a faith beyond which religion cannot go, except in two ways, namely, in the way of understanding them more adequately, and of realising them more fully."

True, this Divine revelation does not answer all questions. As a matter of fact, it answers but a fraction of those which men are accustomed to ask; but it answers so many, and holds out such hopes with regard to the rest, that it may well claim to furnish an adequate solution of the riddle which so many thousands have perished in the vain effort to answer.

But is it true? The detailed discussion of that question does not concern us; but if the answer to it implies historical investigation and discussion, that forms no objection to the claim of the religion to be divine in its origin, universal in its scope, and sufficient for all needs of all times.[1] It might at first appear as if an absolute religion should transcend the limits of time, and be superior to considerations of historical evidence. It is precisely the other way. It is because Christianity is not "a cunningly devised fable," or an equally cunningly devised philosophical system, because it comes into such close vital relations with humanity, that it is not for one age, but for all time. We are all familiar with the fact that Christianity is a historical religion, but Christian teachers have not always understood the significance of the fact. Let us hear Bishop Westcott once more:—

[1] Compare an interesting examination of the relation between the Christ of history and the Christ of experience in Forrest's Kerr Lectures, 1897.

"Christianity claims to be historical, and by this claim it is distinguished from all other religions. Its teaching, its life, its essence, is a history. It was prepared by a long national development, into which the typical elements of the ancient world entered as contributory forces. It is summed up in the facts of a divine-human life. It has been, and still is being, wrought out in the slow and unreturning growth of a society. . . . In this sense Christianity is the only historical religion. . . . Christianity is historical, not simply or characteristically because Christ, standing out before the world at a definite time and place, proclaimed certain truths and laid down certain rules for the constitution and conduct of a society. It is historical because He offered Himself in His own person, and was shown to be, in the events of His life, the revelation which He came to give. It is historical in itself, in its essence; and this being so, it is, in a secondary and yet a unique sense, historical in its antecedents and in its realisation."[1]

The answer which Christianity gives to the enigmas of human life cannot be properly understood unless the bearings of this central and fundamental truth are seen. Men are continually saying: "Accept the moral teaching of Jesus, and throw on one side the superincumbent mass of 'dogma.'" But the Sermon on the Mount is not Christianity. Dr. Westcott goes so far as to say it "is neither the essence of Christ's message to the world, nor, except incidentally, characteristic of it." Where, then, is the essence of that message?

"Christianity, to speak summarily, rests on the conviction that in the life and death and resurrection of Christ, something absolutely new and unparalleled has been added to the experience of men, something new objectively and not simply new as a combination, or an interpretation of earlier or existing phenomena; that in Christ heaven and earth have been historically united; that in Him this union can be made real through all time to each believer; that His nature and His person are such

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 255.

that in Him each man and all men can find a complete and harmonious consummation in an external order. The life of Christ is something absolutely unique in the history of the world, unique not in degree, but in kind. It is related to all else that is unfolded in time, as birth, for example, is related to the development of the individual."[1]

If these things be so, it is clear that the answer of Christianity to the questionings of man, while it may come far short of what he would desire to satisfy his curiosity, and what he might expect in a Divine revelation, is nevertheless in a peculiar sense complete and adequate for man's essential needs. It is so on account of the historical character of the religion. The light it sheds upon human life shines from out of the very midst of that life; it is warm, human, glowing with colour such as never appears in the abstract system of the philosopher. It touches the various parts of our complex life. The gospel is not addressed to the spirit of man only, it does not concern his mind or his body alone; its message is for each man as such, and for the whole race, which is more than a mere aggregate of individuals. Only a historical religion, the centre of which is the Incarnation, could give the kind of answer which Christianity gives to man's eager inquiries concerning the scope and significance of human life.

At the same time, the "absolute" character of the Christian religion is not interfered with. There is nothing local, partial, temporary, "provincial" in the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mohammedanism and Buddhism, which claim to be universal religions, both embody in their sacred books elements which do

[1] P. 268.

not bear transplanting to other climes, other civilisations, than those in which the faiths were cradled. The sketch of His Kingdom given by the Divine Founder of Christianity left much to be "fulfilled" in the fulness of the times and in the course of development of the nations. Every age reveals new meaning in the old and familiar words of the New Testament, and makes clear how the same principles are to find fresh illustration in new developments of intellectual, political, and social life. It is only through the lapse of generations and of ages that we can come to understand what is meant by that Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head: "from whom all the body, fitly framed and knit together, through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."

The purpose is declared; the method of realisation is largely hidden. The very reserves of Christianity constitute an excellence in it as a religion undertaking to meet the manifold questionings of man. There is much that it does not profess to reveal, and those have not been its best advocates who have tried to round off the arcs of truth which Jesus Christ left incomplete. His silence is Divine, as well as His speech. It is impossible for man to comprehend methods for the very explication of which a new state of society must be presupposed. But sufficient is revealed to tax and exhaust the highest energies of the noblest men. Whatever complaint be made of Christianity, none can say that its ideals are not pure enough and glorious enough, that there is not sufficient scope for the

aspirations and energies of a new time. It far outsoars the ideals of the nineteenth century, as it distanced the highest hopes of the first. Its revelation of God, of sin, of redemption, of righteousness, of brotherhood, and of the "restitution of all things" yet to come, forms an answer to the Great Enigma, What, and Whence, and Wherefore is man? such as neither philosopher nor naturalist, neither sage nor saint, has ever conceived. It leaves many spots in the pilgrim-road still dark. In looking back, in looking round, in looking forward, by the light of the lantern which it supplies, there are many regions but dimly lighted, many others still wrapped in impenetrable night. But Christ's Lamp of life lights up the pathway sufficiently to console the heart and to guide the steps. Whatever may be the case with those who speculate and those who philosophise and those who question, he who *follows* Christ, as He Himself promised, does not walk in darkness, but has the light of life.

It is true that "they are not all Israel who are of Israel." Not every Christian, not all Christendom, not all Christianity, is Christian. Amongst the many reasons why Christianity does not commend itself to many earnest, thoughtful men, who are seeking to read the great riddle, must certainly be reckoned the fact that they do not rightly understand what it is. This may be their own fault; sometimes it is the fault of representative Christians. And as from age to age a restatement of the problems of life becomes necessary, so from age to age the answer which Christianity gives to them needs to be restated also. It is of no use to say that the truth is old. It is; but the men are new, and the forms are new, and the combinations are new,

and the hopes and possibilities of life are new, and those who desire to make plain to their contemporaries what answer the Lord Jesus Christ gives to their perplexities and anxious questions, must be men who can see afresh for themselves, and state afresh to others, the truth which has satisfied the noblest and loftiest aspirations of the noblest and loftiest men who ever thought and lived upon earth. Some such restatement of the Christian message is being loudly called for in the present generation, and to some extent it is being given. Every faithful disciple of Christ who receives the truth direct from the Master, and not as the hundredth echo of an echo caught from His voice, can aid in making His answer to the enigma of life more plain to the struggling, suffering sons of men.

But the message of Christianity is at best a working hypothesis: can it be verified? That is not the subject of the present essay, yet these remarks would be incomplete without an indication of the kind of answer which is forthcoming. A historical religion must be capable of defence on historical lines, and the progress of criticism is proving every day how complete that defence can be made. Discovery after discovery during the last decade has attested the authenticity and trustworthiness of the Christian documents, and gone so far to confirm the accuracy of their account of the Christian origins. An absolute religion, again, must be prepared to meet all comers, and to vindicate its ability to satisfy all the reasonable demands of man, whose cravings are infinite, and who requires a religion of infinite scope to meet and still them. The vindication in this instance is so complete, that the complaint now for the most part heard is, not that Christianity in its revelation of

God, and its proclamation of duty and its heralding of hope, is not full of comfort and inspiration, but rather that it is "too good to be true." Self-denying sceptics boast of going without the comfort of a religion they profess to be unable, not unwilling, to believe.

But the true verification, after all, is in experience. The "evidential value of Christian experience" has received increased attention of late at the hands of Christian apologists.[1] The full statement of the case, however, can hardly be made in logical form. Whether we refer to the verification in the history of Christendom, or the verification in individual Christian life, the arguments are such as defy complete statement in language. Their general nature can be explained, but their full force clearly depends upon that which it transcends the power of words to express. Bishop Westcott very rightly insists in one place upon "the enormous difference between the logical development of a doctrine and the progressive interpretation of a fact through experience. The fundamental statement of a doctrine can never be complete. But the fact finds its interpretation through the fulness of life. One influence corrects and completes another. And the record of this progressive interpretation lies in Christian history." The truth is profound and pregnant. And one among many corollaries of it is that neither the answer of Christianity to the enigmas of life, nor its full verification, can be complete without experience on the part of the individual Christian, and the richer and more varied experience of the progressive community in which each fills his place. Hence arises the felt deficiency of books like Mr. Lilly's. Able as it is, non-Christians and

[1] See Essay VII. p. 213.

Christians alike will be disposed to say that it has but touched the fringe of the subject. The real argument for Christianity comes not from those who are convinced that they *may* be Christians without being "irrational and therefore immoral," but from those who feel that they *must* be Christians, if they would be faithful to their own highest ideals, and carry out the teaching of their own personal experience. With Luther they say, "Ich kann nicht anders." The constraint of duty becomes one with the constraint of love, and both mind and heart, weary with many wanderings, rest content with an answer to life's riddle, which at least has proved its power to solve many difficulties. Some of the locked doors have been opened by this key; the rest will yield by and by.

Mystery remains and will still remain. But "just where the thought of man runs up into mystery—the mystery of Matter and Life in the world around us—the mystery of our own humanity, in itself and in its struggle against sin and death—the mystery, above all, of Eternal Being—Christianity meets that searching of thought, and shows how all the threads, lost to reason in the darkness, are gathered into the hand of a God, not unknown and unknowable, but revealed to man in the Lord Jesus Christ."[1] Mysteries remain, for if a human teacher professes here and now to clear up *all* the mysteries of our complex and incomplete humanity, we know him at once to be a charlatan, not a prophet. Mysteries remain, but where man most needs guidance, most needs consolation, it is furnished by the religion of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man. Mysteries remain, but they gradually fade away into light before

[1] Barry, *Some Lights of Science on the Faith*, p. 293.

the eye of him who does not speculate and question, but follows. The Seer of the first century is represented by the poet of the nineteenth as uttering words of wisdom, containing a lesson as practical as it is sublime—

> "I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And hath so far advanced thee to be wise.
> Would'st thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?
> In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
> Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
> Thou hast it; use it, and forthwith; or die?"

Those who faithfully tread the path thus marked out will not be long in solving the Great Enigma.

III.

THE SEAT OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

MANY students of the pending controversy concerning the Old Testament Scriptures have been complacently resting on the assurance that these discussions have no bearing on the Christian faith and practice. The methods of modern criticism, some of them sound enough, others as fallacious and dangerous as arbitrary assumptions, hasty inferences and unwarranted conclusions can be, have been allowed to pass without question, because scholarly men have employed them, and the conclusions reached have been understood to leave the citadel of the Christian faith unharmed. Such persons have not been allowed to remain long in their illusion. The effect upon the New Testament of admitting as valid the processes adopted by critics of the Old is already being made plain to those who keep their eyes open. The "analysis" which pulls to pieces the Pentateuch is not likely to spare the Gospels. The edge of the dissecting knife can as easily be turned this way as that, and to some of those who use it there is nothing sacred. Our belief in the value of sound criticism makes it incumbent on us to expose the errors of criticism that is only unscrupulous and destructive. The methods that have been employed to do violence to the outer courts of the Christian temple are afresh

employed, as we might expect, upon its inmost shrine; the sanctity of the whole structure is imperilled, and the discussion concerning the authority of the Old Testament has already become a discussion concerning authority in religion.

The attack upon the New Testament as an authoritative guide has been led of late by an admittedly able and formidable champion. Dr. Martineau is a veteran controversialist, a powerful and fascinating writer, and a philosopher who has defended the truths of Theism and spiritual philosophy more vigorously than most advocates of the strictly orthodox school. The fulminations of the book called *Supernatural Religion* proved ineffective some years ago, in spite of the shouts of many hasty and thoughtless supporters; a failure partly due to the anonymous character of the book, partly to its evident bias and bitterness, but mainly to the fact that its great parade of scholarship was shown not to be borne out by close examination. The late Bishop Lightfoot found it no difficult task to demolish its arguments and expose its pretensions. The name of Dr. Martineau, however, is respected wherever it is known. Thousands of students have been grateful to him for his *Types of Ethical Theory* and *Study of Religion*. Those who have gladly sat at his feet whilst he discoursed of Divine philosophy, which his glowing and imaginative treatment has shown to be

> "Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute,
> And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
> Where no crude surfeit reigns,"

were prepared to listen to him further. One who discoursed so eloquently and so convincingly of the nature

and true basis of religion, might be supposed to know something of the "seat of its authority." Those who were fascinated by the earlier volumes were not improbably prepared to accept the teaching of the later without much doubt or question.

This would lead in our estimation to fatal and perhaps irreparable error, yet many may hardly be able to distinguish between the same writer in his strength and in his weakness; between Dr. Martineau loftily constructive, and Dr. Martineau virulently destructive; between the advocate of a sublime Theism, and the sceptical assailant of orthodox and catholic Christianity. It is not a grateful task to "lay hands upon father Parmenides," but our respect for the venerable philosopher makes it the more incumbent on us to point out the grave fallacies which lie at the basis of the arguments in his *Seat of Authority in Religion.* The hand of the veteran of fourscore has in many respects by no means lost its cunning; the charm of style, the glow of feeling, the mastery of detail, the copious knowledge suffused by earnestness of conviction, and made the groundwork of powerful appeals,—all these qualities are still to be found in Dr. Martineau's pages. But the cogency of argument, the spiritual insight, the hold upon the conscience, the sway over the mind and heart vanish when the author turns from his positive to his negative teaching. The builder has become the destroyer, and the very character of the writer's mind seems in many respects to have changed. Had Dr. Martineau exhibited towards the implicit beliefs of the human heart and the fundamental truths of philosophy and religion one tithe of the scepticism and incredulity shown in his treatment of the New Testament writings,

and the doctrines of Christianity, he would have proved himself one of the most trenchant Atheistic writers of the day. There is a reason for this striking difference which we shall point out later, but it is time that we described the book itself, grappled with its arguments, and gave some ground for showing why a leader of thought who has so nobly vindicated to the present generation the existence of God and the supremacy of conscience, so sadly and egregiously fails when he comes to interpret and estimate the religion of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Dr. Martineau, as the title of his book implies, sets out to examine the true ground of authority in religion. The first book deals with God in nature, God in humanity, and God in history. God is revealed in nature indeed, but nature is not the characteristic feature of His self-expression, it is rather, "His eternal act of self-limitation." It is to God in humanity we must turn, if we would understand the meaning of law and the basis of Divine authority. Very finely Dr. Martineau, after his wont, vindicates the claims of conscience and marks how, when these are rightly interpreted, "the cold obedience to a mysterious necessity is exchanged for the allegiance of personal affection,—the veil falls from the shadowed face of moral authority, and the directing love of the all-holy God shines forth." In the course of history, however, we find truth blended with error. The ideals of duty are Divine, the actuals that come out of them, or fail to come out of them, are ours. "Our modern religion is a triple cord into which are twined, as strands once separate, the Greek, the Jewish, the German elements of thought and feeling, and which, where it is perfectly

woven, combines the strength of all. These several factors bring with them pure and impure elements, and it is the business of a thoughtful student of religion to distinguish between these. To make this distinction in the case of Christianity, is the object of the following books."

The writer's first business is to point out where in his view authority has been "artificially misplaced." Under this head he speaks at length of Catholics and the Church, and has little difficulty in showing the fallacy of the claim to infallibility made by Romanism, or in exposing the futility of the supposed four Divine marks or notes of the Church—unity, sanctity, universality, and apostolicity. It is a hard task, as Dr. Martineau expresses it, "to convince us that there is nothing diviner upon earth than a spiritual corporation which can have a Borgia for its head, the councils of Ephesus and Constance for boards of justice, and the Index and Encyclicals as its expressions of pastoral wisdom." Dr. Martineau next turns upon Protestantism, and essays to show that those who trust in an infallible book are as much deceived as those who trust in an infallible Church. He declaims against the requirement to accept Scripture as a Divine authority, "to believe whatever is affirmed in the New Testament, and practise whatever is enjoined." The Catholic Church is "an ever-living dictator," the Protestant belief in Scripture hands men over to "ancient legislation and guidance"; both are equally distasteful to the believer in individual reason and conscience, who esteems both alike as vain attempts to secure satisfactory and adequate direction in human affairs.

An inquiry is then instituted into the character of

the Scriptures of the New Testament, with the conclusion that the synoptical Gospels are late compilations, containing only the remains of popular tradition, a large part of which is of doubtful value, and the whole utterly destitute of authority, while the Fourth Gospel, "the only one for which a single writer is responsible, has its birthday in the middle of the second century, and is not the work of a witness at all." Only six of St. Paul's Epistles are genuine, and they contain no historical testimony to the person of Christ worth speaking of. It remains, therefore, to sift the evidence from such books as have come down to us, that we may glean trustworthy facts concerning the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, and separate what is truly religious and Divine from the false theories and foolish superstitions which grew up around His name, and have been embodied in the doctrines of the Christian religion. Jesus never professed to be the Messiah—the name stands indeed for nothing but a floating Jewish fancy. He never rose from the dead, and as for the speculations of evangelists and apostles concerning the Eternal Word, the Incarnation, the Atonement and Redemption through Christ, including grace here and glory hereafter,—these are growths of superstition which can all be accounted for by the discerning student of history. Then "the veil may be taken away," and the truth known. The "truth," according to Dr. Martineau, is something like this:—

"And so it has happened that for the religion of Christ has been substituted all through the ages, a theory about him, what he was in nature, what he did by coming into the world, what he left behind when he quitted it. These are matters of which chiefly confessions and churches speak; and by doing so, they

make him into the *object*, instead of the vehicle and source of their religion; they change him from the 'author,' because supreme example, into the *end* of faith; and thus turn him, whose very function it was to leave us alone with God, into the idol and incense which interpose to hide him. If his work is not to be utterly frustrated in the world, the whole of this mythology must be taken down as it was built up; if once it was needed to conciliate the weakness of mankind, it now alienates their strength; if to Jew or Greek it made some elements of his religion credible, with us it runs the risk of rendering it all incredible; if ever it helped to give to Christianity the lead of human intelligence, to secure for it mastership in the schools, authority in the court, and the front rank in the advance of civilisation, it now reverses these effects, irritating and harassing the pioneers of knowledge, compelling reformers to disregard or defy it, and leaving theological thought upon so low a plane that minds of a high level must sink to touch it, and great statesmen and grave judges and refined scholars are no sooner in contact with it, and holding forth upon it, than all robustness seems to desert their intellect, and they drift into pitiable weakness."

This is but a meagre account of a book which contains an elaborate criticism of the whole system of Christian doctrine, and an eloquent exposition of Dr. Martineau's own attenuated creed, but even this outline is sufficient to show what is the writer's view of authority in religion, amounting, in fact, to a repudiation of all authority in the usual sense of the term, and a falling back upon individual reason and intuitive, unverifiable perceptions of the Divine. It shows also on what lines of argument Dr. Martineau proceeds in his uncompromising attack upon historical Christianity, and sufficiently prepares the way for the remarks we have to make upon it. It is impossible to say whether the author's theological beliefs spring from his critical views of the New Testament books, or whether his readiness to accept the most extreme results of historical

criticism are due to his previously rooted antagonism to orthodox Christianity. If a careful perusal of the book leaves a decided impression that the latter of these alternatives represents the fact, we have no right to assume that it is correct, though Dr. Martineau's account in his Preface of the critics whom alone he appears to have consulted is sufficient index of the kind of conclusion at which he wished to arrive.

What remains is, that Dr. Martineau gives the final blow to the belief that Unitarianism is compatible with an acceptance of the New Testament. The old Socinian position that Jesus was a son of God by a miraculous conception, a prophet specially endowed with Divine grace and power, the Jewish Messiah, but not the co-eternal son of God, is entirely given up. So far, Dr. Martineau is logical. He sees that the acceptance of the New Testament as an authority substantially implies adhesion to orthodox Christianity, and he utterly repudiates both. He is not severely logical, as we shall show, in maintaining the relation between his arguments concerning the dates of the books, and his theories concerning their contents. It is difficult to keep these two topics entirely separate; we must, however, as far as possible do so, as we assay to point out fallacies all along the line of Dr. Martineau's arguments. We join issue with him on these four cardinal points:—(1) The dates assigned to the books of the New Testament, the literary and critical questions being in this volume very summarily and inadequately dealt with. (2) The theories advanced concerning the "origins" of Christianity, and the growth of myths concerning the person of Jesus. (3) The philosophical

theories concerning the nature of revelation which actually, although not theoretically, underlie the whole structure, may be shown to be baseless. And (4) an argument of great strength against the validity of Dr. Martineau's theorisings is furnished by the history of the last eighteen hundred years, which has rendered valuable testimony to the Divine origin of the Christianity Dr. Martineau despises. Through those centuries orthodox objective Christianity has demonstrated its adaptation to the nature and needs of man, and furnished a most instructive demonstration of the barrenness and practical futility of the bare creed of the Unitarian Rationalist when standing alone.

The position of Protestants regarding revelation is not fairly put by Dr. Martineau, who represents them as making revelation to be wholly a thing of the past, entirely confined to a lifeless record, as if we were entirely dependent for knowledge of Divine things on literary and antiquarian evidence. That is, of course, an exaggeration; but it is true enough that Protestants, and all who believe in historical Christianity, lay great stress upon the faithfulness of the record of historical events that has come down to us in the New Testament, and their position may not unfairly be expressed in Dr. Martineau's words: "And so is forged a three-linked argument which joins divine and human things'; if the facts are real, the doctrines are certain; if the books are authentic, the facts are real; that the books are authentic, adequate testimony proves." Dr. Martineau sneers at "logical devotees whose enthusiasm loves to reach their God by a long and painful pilgrimage of thought"; he is apparently ignorant of the fact that evangelical Christians believe in and enjoy

as direct access to God as himself; that their communion with the living and eternal God depends no more than his own upon "dead facts stranded on the shore of the oblivious years." He apparently does not know or conveniently ignores the fact that historical evidence is only one among many strands which go to form the moorings of a Christian's creed; that the Theist, like the Christian, is bound to study history, and that on literary and historical questions the unbeliever must consent to investigate and argue as much as the believer, both alike being bound to lay aside prejudice, and decide historical questions on historical evidence, in accordance with testimony adduced.

Unfortunately the arguments on which Dr. Martineau relies to prove the soundness of his views as to the books of the New Testament are condensed into very small compass. They may be satisfactory to himself, and he may plead the impossibility of entering into details belonging to a technical inquiry, but, as the foundation on which so important a superstructure is reared, they are exceedingly flimsy and unsatisfactory. Instead of the caution which marks the scholar we find the self-confidence which marks the sceptical dogmatist. Very frequently he argues in a circle:—these books were late in date, therefore their testimony is worthless: their testimony is such that they must have been written late. A specimen or two must suffice to show how airily and summarily Dr. Martineau waves on one side evidence one tithe of which would be sufficient to establish ten times over the date of any writing of a classical author.

Only eight pages are devoted to the subject of the Synoptic Gospels, and only parts of these contain any

reasoning. The problem of the composition of these books is no doubt a complex one, and we by no means wish to assume that the traditional view of their authorship is made out beyond question. But Dr. Martineau does not deal fairly with such facts as he chooses to comment on, while he ignores others of cardinal importance. As a proof of the former statement, we cite his treatment of the quotations found in Justin Martyr. It is true that Justin's phrase, "Memoirs of the Apostles," *may* not refer to our canonical Gospels, though in one place (*Apol.* i. 66) he says: ἃ καλεῖται εὐαγγέλια, "which are called Gospels"—a passage which destructive critics allege to be spurious. But the coincidences of language are so numerous and cover so large an area of Gospel history, that either Justin must have used our Gospels, or a document later than the Gospels, which presupposes them. In either case, we have early testimony to a belief in the facts of the Gospel history, which can by no means be set aside, on the ground that these three narratives were not severally composed by one man, known to be an apostle and eye-witness. As specimens of the way in which Dr. Martineau occasionally ignores evidence, we may say that hardly any notice is taken of the evidence of the Ignatian Epistles, whose genuineness has been established by the late Bishop Lightfoot, while the recent discovery of Tatian's *Diatessaron* in an Arabic translation, which sets entirely at rest the controversy concerning this work, and establishes the view of it taken by orthodox critics, is not even alluded to. This single work, beginning, as it does, with the opening words of John i. 1, proves beyond question that our four Gospels had been so far received and recognised in the Church by the

middle of the second century, that a harmony or digest of them had been constructed. The Latin translation, published by Mœsinger (1879), of Ephraem's Commentary on Tatian's work, was sufficient to establish its true character, but the Arabic translation of the work itself, published in Rome, by Ciasca (1888) sets this question entirely at rest.[1] No discussion of the date and authenticity of the Gospels should ignore this important evidence.

This brief and unsatisfactory treatment of external evidence is matched by assumptions that the Gospel narratives are incredible, because they contain "anachronisms" and "inconsistencies," of which the following are examples. In St. Matthew two Gadarene demoniacs are mentioned, and two blind men near Jericho, while other accounts speak only of one; in St. Matthew and St. Mark both robbers revile Christ, while in St. Luke only one is said to have done so; in two of the three Evangelists the Twelve are ordered on their Galilean mission to take no staff, while in the third they are enjoined to take nothing but a staff. Of course, if these trifling differences had not existed, and the narratives had coincided in every detail, it would have been taken as proof positive that they were not independent, and their testimony would have been correspondingly discounted; as it is, the existence of the slightest variation is called a "striking discrepancy," and pressed into the service of those who wish to discredit the witnesses.

[1] See *The Diatessaron of Tatian*, by Professor Hemphill of Dublin, 1888, and the note in Bishop Lightfoot's Essays on *Supernatural Religion*, Appendix, p. 287. An English translation, entitled *The Earliest Life of Christ*, was published by the Rev. J. Hamlyn Hill in 1895.

In order to show that the Apostles attributed to Christ their own crude and gross ideas, mingling them with the teachings of Jesus, and "obtruding a rude interruption upon their purity and depth," we are told that the following incredible statements are made concerning Christ: that "He claimed the Messiahship, yet would not let it be mentioned; that He contemplated and fore-announced His death and resurrection, yet without succeeding in preparing them for the event; that He sided with the Jewish Christians and wished only Israelites to belong to Him; that, on the contrary, He foresaw how the Jewish appeal would comparatively fail, and the gospel must be preached to all nations," etc. (p. 188). In all these cases, and others of which they are samples, we are told "the anachronism must be felt by every one who has closely studied the infancy of the Christian Church"—we must add "and come to Dr. Martineau's conclusions concerning it." Fair-minded persons will certainly require a different kind of evidence from any Dr. Martineau adduces, before they come to the conclusion that the Synoptic Gospels present "the verisimilitude of unaccredited tradition," or the "false chronology and irreconcilable contradictions" which the ready prepared sceptic confidently traces in them.

In discussing the date and authorship of the Fourth Gospel, Dr. Martineau shows himself critically behind the times. He devotes several sections of his book to maintaining the theory of Baur, which assigns the Gospel to the latter part of the second century, probably from 160 to 170 A.D. But the arguments used by Dr. Martineau concerning the external evidence have been met again and again during the repeated

assaults of the last twenty years. The critical position at present has been thus correctly characterised:—"In the critical sifting it has undergone, the date of the Fourth Gospel has been receding further and further back in the second century, so that now hardly any critic with any pretension to fairness puts it later than the very beginning of that century, if not the end of the first century, which comes very close to the date assigned it by those who believe in the Johannine authorship."[1] It forms no part of our present object to discuss these matters in detail, but we cannot forbear to point out that while Dr. Martineau dwells at considerable length upon what he considers the important differences between St. John and the Synoptists, in the conception of the person of Christ, he entirely fails to notice the strong phraseology of the latter with regard to the dignity of our Lord, the majesty of His claims, or the greatness of His promises in such passages as the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew, describing His judgment of the whole world, and the statement of Matt. xxviii. 18, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth." The close coincidence, again, between the phraseology of Matt. xi. 27, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father," etc., and the language of St. John is hardly referred to. The attempt to show that the distinct ascription of Divinity to Christ in the Fourth Gospel represents a later cast of thought, impossible till a considerable time after His death, is, of course, at once obviated by pointing to the acknowledged Epistles of St. Paul.

The difficulties of the critic do not, however, end

[1] Salmon, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 213.

here. He is compelled to deny that the Gospel and the First Epistle known by the name of St. John are from the same author. The admission of identity of authorship would have several awkward consequences, and Dr. Martineau says very lamely: "I am more impressed by a few fundamental differences of religious conception pervading the two writings than by several agreements in terminology and secondary categories of thought." One of these fundamental differences is that "the Gospel knows nothing of an atoning or propitiatory efficacy in the blood of Christ!" A critic who will argue thus loses all claim to confidence. Further, it used to be considered a strong argument against the Johannine authorship of the Gospel, to ascribe the Apocalypse to St. John, and press the differences of style and thought between the two books. But it was soon found that the dignity ascribed to our Lord in the Book of Revelation necessitated the abandonment of the argument that lofty language concerning the person of Christ implies a late date, and Dr. Martineau takes refuge in the hypothesis of Vischer, that the Revelation is a composite work, the great body of which is not Christian at all, but Jewish, with a Christian prologue (chs. i. to iii.), and epilogue (ch. xxii.). And this of a book which pronounces a special anathema upon those who meddle with its contents, and which throughout its chapters uses more than any other the significant title of "the Lamb!"

But we need waste no further time upon the extravagance of some of Dr. Martineau's critical views, when we see how he treats books of the New Testament, the date and authorship of which it is absolutely impossible to dispute. He admits only six of St.

Paul's Epistles to be genuine, rejecting with summary arrogance the considerable and express external evidence furnished, for example, to the Epistle to the Colossians, with the calm assumption that it contains "such evident traces of a post-apostolic time, so many thoughts unsuited to the personality of the reputed author," that the presumption in favour of Pauline authorship is broken down. Even such scepticism as Dr. Martineau's is compelled, however, to admit that the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, are Pauline, and were written within some thirty years of our Lord's death. But Dr. Martineau knows how to evade difficulties which he cannot remove. St. Paul's testimony to the Divinity of our Lord, and the substantial acceptance of Christian doctrine at the very early period when his great Epistles were written, is almost contemptuously set aside:—

"In the larger gospel of Paul, which swept over the Gentile world, and ultimately reduced the original community to the position of a sect, the biography of Jesus, the traits of his mind, the story of his ministry play no part at all; it is from Heaven, after he has done with the hills of Galilee and the courts of the temple, that he begins with his last apostle; and it is in Heaven alone that that apostle knows anything of him—in his glorified state and immortal function, and not in the simple humanity and prefatory affections of his career below."

Again, Paul's teaching

"is based, like the Galilean evangel which preceded it, on Jewish preconceptions, which have neither validity for us, nor foundation in the personal religion of Jesus. It is a theory in which the accepted facts of his death and resurrection are wrought into their place in a vast theodicy, embracing the providential drama of humanity from its opening to its consummation. Being the theory

of one whose knowledge of Jesus began with his revelation from Heaven, it naturally made no use of the features of his earthly life and personality. Considered as the after-thought of a posthumous disciple, it is a wonderful construction, full of original combination and deep experience, and large sweep of thought and sympathy. But it presents us rather with the outer contour of the Christian faith, as organised for a world's history, than with the inner secret of God, which lives as its kernel in each Christlike soul."

It is in passages like these that Dr. Martineau reveals his real mind and method. If he can by any stretch of critical hypothesis find what may be styled an argument for the late date or spuriousness of any of the New Testament Books, he will do so. But if not, he sweeps early and authentic documents equally out of his way for the purposes of argument. His position is not that of an inquirer after truth, asking which of these writings actually proceeded from an apostle, what is its teaching, and what does it prove concerning the personality of "Jesus who is called Christ," but rather, granted that the man Jesus of Nazareth uttered many remarkable sayings concerning the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men, was crucified, dead and buried, but by no means rose again the third day, what is to be made of the curious assortment of writings, early and late, collected in the New Testament, and how did the incredible mythology concerning His Divinity, Atonement, and the salvation of a world through Him arise? Such a mode of investigation will, doubtless, produce remarkable results; whether it is likely to bring us near the truth is another matter. Let us see, however, what the results reached actually are.

According to Dr. Martineau, the simple gospel

taught by Jesus, and constituting his personal religion, one of love to God and man, inward purity, lowliness, and self-denial, became overlaid by an elaborate and incredible Gospel *concerning* Jesus, describing what He was, and what He did for man's salvation. In successive stages these changes came about, the modes of thought of various families of men produced modifications in the original message, "its voice was inevitably changed, and, like a border dialect, passsd into a patois pure to neither heaven nor earth."

"Three, at least, of such modifying media it had been called to traverse before our New Testament writings were complete, namely, the popular Judaism of Israel at home; the Hellenistic theology of mixed Israelites and proselytes abroad; and the Gentile sects of Gnostic speculation; influences of which the Temple, the Synagogue, and the School may be regarded as the respective symbols."

Each of these mingled clay with the original gold, bound up what was perishable with what was eternal, and thus it came about that Jesus was first of all regarded as the Jewish Messiah, then as the Second Adam, and then as the Word, the Alexandrine Logos made flesh. These doctrines, together with the belief in Christ's Resurrection from the dead, are so many accretions of mythology, which it has been left for the discriminating genius of modern criticism to discover, point out, and carefully sift away, leaving the few grains of pure gold which Dr. Martineau will allow to remain as fragments of the personal religion of Jesus of Nazareth, his contribution to religious truth.

It is impossible for us to examine into the details of Dr. Martineau's elaborate hypothetical structure. We may take a single specimen of his method. As may be

imagined, very little is said about the Resurrection, the evidence for it, and the way in which the unaccountable belief of the earliest disciples in a purely imaginary and totally unexpected event came about. But let that pass. Dr. Martineau, contrary to the views of most of his school, undertakes to prove that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, and he can hardly find language strong enough to describe the mischief which this erroneous view of His person and character has wrought. This is "the first deforming mask, the first robe of hopeless disguise" under which the true Jesus disappears. This doctrine "has corrupted the interpretation of the Old Testament and degraded the sublimest religious literature of the ancient world into a book of magic and a tissue of riddles." It has "spoiled the very composition of the New Testament," and made "the highest influence ever shed upon humanity subservient to the proof of untenable positions and the establishment of unreal relations." Away with all this mythology! cries Dr. Martineau. "Knowing as we do that Messiah was but the figure of an Israelitish dream," why should we trouble ourselves with the precise shape of an obsolete chimera? All very well for a sceptical critic who wants the ground cleared to make way for his own views of history. But unfortunately just here lies one most formidable *crux* for those who wish to re-write history and can tolerate any incredible theory that enables them to dispense with the supernatural. So troublesome have naturalistic critics found this particular difficulty that they have tried all kinds of plans to avoid it, utterly inconsistent with one another. The Messianic hopes of the Jews in the time of Jesus

being what every one knows they were, how came it to pass that a Galilean carpenter's son, who worked no miracle and was shamefully put to death, was within twenty years of his death acknowledged to be the long-expected Messiah by tens of thousands of Jews, including Saul of Tarsus among them?[1] Strauss holds that the fact that the disciples after Jesus' death, believed him to be the Messiah, "is not to be comprehended, unless when living he had implanted the conviction in their minds." Renan characteristically hints that Jesus unworthily tried to fit himself to the Jewish ideal, in order to win disciples. All kinds of methods have been adopted to explain the faith of the first generation of Christians in Jesus as a supernatural Christ, but few have tried to sweep the board clear as Dr. Martineau does, maintaining that Jesus never made any claim to Messiahship. He himself acknowledges that the preponderance of critical opinion, including the decided and weighty judgment of Harnack, is against him. The attempt to show that our Lord's characteristic name for Himself, "Son of Man," includes no such claim, is very weak. But the theory which Dr. Martineau advocates, implies that a claim which Jesus did not make, which His disciples were not disposed to concede, which must have appeared to be overthrown by His suffering and death, was inexplicably revived immediately after His death by a handful of depressed and discredited disciples, that it was eagerly adopted by crowds of adherents and churches founded upon the basis of this belief within an incredibly short period, although no supernatural power of any kind had been

[1] For an able treatment of the whole subject, see Prof. V. H. Stanton's *Jewish and Christian Messiah*. T. & T. Clark. 1886.

displayed by Jesus, nor any such power manifested by His disciples. This implies a draft upon our credulity which no rational student of history would dream of making, but for the necessity of having to describe an epoch in which supernatural power was the chief efficient force, with the supernatural left out.

Leaving, however, the insurmountable objection that no sufficient time is allowed for the growth of myth, an objection which cuts at the root of the laboured account here given of the growth of various "theories concerning the person of Jesus," let us come to an objection which must ere this have struck every intelligent reader, and which Dr. Martineau ineffectually endeavours to meet. Surely it is plain that writers who treat the sacred narratives thus are but creating a ghost or *simulacrum* of the historical Christ by an arbitrary process of their own, selecting certain of the sayings which seem to them profound or impressive, and rejecting what seems to them to savour of superstition. Dr. Martineau's answer is really no answer at all, but simply a restatement of his position:—

"The charge would be unanswerable, if the story were all upon one level, and the credibility were equal of the part that is taken and the part that is left. But this could only be the case if the Gospels were the products of pure history, with the risks of error impartially distributed over their whole surface. What, however, is the fact respecting (let us say) the first of them? It is compiled throughout in a dogmatic interest, and is historical in the same way as the recital of an advocate shaped for the support of the case he undertakes to plead. The position which it aims to establish, namely, that the life it relates is that of the future Messiah, is present everywhere. . . . If we want an earlier word than this, we have it in the letters of Paul; but there, Christ is already in heaven, and we learn nothing of His ministry on earth."

Surely this is *petitio principii* with a vengeance! The argument runs full circle to its starting-point. The objection is made—"you are making arbitrary selections from authorities, and fashioning an historical figure of your own from parts that please you." And the answer is: "I cannot accept the testimony of Matthew, because he has so much to say of the Messiah, nor that of Paul, because he believes in Christ risen and glorified." Dr. Martineau, however, would probably reply that he must sift the only available historical evidence concerning the personal life of Jesus by canons which seem to him warranted. In one place he attempts to formulate such canons:—

"1. Whenever, during or before the ministry of Jesus, any person in the narrative is made to speak in language or refer to events which had their origin at a later date, the report is incredible as an anachronism.

"2. Miraculous events cannot be regarded as adequately attested, in presence of natural causes accounting for belief in their occurrence.

"3. Acts and words ascribed to Jesus, which plainly transcend the moral level of the narrators authenticate themselves as His, while such as are out of character with His spirit, but congruous with theirs, must be referred to inaccurate tradition."

The subjective and arbitrary character of the first and third of these canons is obvious at a glance. It is the nineteenth century critic, soaked through with Rationalism, who is to determine what thoughts and ideas are of late date—a reference to actual events which may prove an anachronism is of course unexceptionable; and the same critic is to decide what is or is not above "the moral level" of the narrators, and what is or is not consonant with what he understands by "the spirit of Jesus." It is easy to trace out the pro-

cess by which, instead of a Gospel according to St. John, we get a gospel according to Dr. Martineau. We respect the critic, but we prefer the evangelist.

Let us, however, see what is meant by the second canon above cited, dealing with miracle. Our author rather makes a merit of not pronouncing miracles to be *à priori* impossible. His admission, however, amounts to little in practice. He says: "Our stock of known laws, not being a closed circle, does not shut out an anomalous phenomenon as impossible, and entitle us to say, It did not happen. What it does authorise us to say is, 'Granting its occurrence, you can never tell that it was a miracle'; for there is always room for the unexpected in the gaps of undetermined law; and when assigned to its place there, it belongs to the sphere of *nature*, and not to what is *beyond nature*, as you want your miracle to be." Reported miracles, however, may be incredible for the want of adequate evidence, and in the case of Christ's life, "it is impossible to reach any original attestation, which we can appreciate as adequate to substantiate the tales that would be incredible to-day." Consequently all that is miraculous may freely be cut out of the Gospel narratives. What kind of a *caput mortuum* is left, not many Christians would care to take the trouble to inquire. Given such canons as the three above mentioned, worked in the spirit which Dr. Martineau illustrates upon almost every page of his volume, we have no need to ask what will be the result. A Jesus who is not the Christ, for Christ is only the name for a foolish dream; one who is neither Son of God nor Son of Man, as those phrases have usually been interpreted, who worked no miracle, uttered no prophecy, but left

on record aphorisms somewhat more spiritual than those of Confucius, and died a martyr's death somewhat more pathetic than that of Socrates, such is the image —*par levibus ventis volucrique simillima somno*—which writers like Dr. Martineau offer us instead of the Jesus of the Gospels. The analysis has done its work, the substance is gone, only the shadow remains. No one, believer or unbeliever, will care much what is the shape of the shadow. "Ye have taken away our Lord, and we know not where ye have laid Him."

Only let it not be supposed that this is the result of fair and sustained argument. What has been shown is, first, that the writings of the New Testament are utterly and unalterably opposed to the Socinian or modern Unitarian idea of Jesus. The authority of these books must be destroyed, if the Person who is the Centre of the Christian faith is no longer to be adored as God, and trusted in as a Saviour from sin. In other words, orthodox Christianity is the religion of the New Testament. We have known it all along, but Unitarians have not always confessed it. Secondly, the authority of these books may be undermined, if the writers are not trustworthy witnesses to the facts they relate. But Dr. Martineau has entirely failed to prove them to be untrustworthy, because he has begun by assuming the very conclusions he set out to prove. It needs no conjurer to say that if the rationalistic premises be granted, and the documents analysed according to the canons described, rationalistic conclusions will follow, and nothing will be left in the documents which the rationalist does not admit. So that the result of Dr. Martineau's elaborate investigation is, that the Protestant Scriptures possess no authority,

because the writers give us mythology instead of history; and if we ask for the proof that their narratives are mythological, the reply is, not because they are late in date, for this Dr. Martineau utterly fails to prove, but because they imply the supernatural and miraculous. The miraculous is not *à priori* impossible, but no attestation can prove it, therefore the New Testament Scriptures possess no authority (Q. E. D.). But who will be convinced by such argumentation, who was not virtually convinced before?

The fact is, that there is a deeper scepticism than has hitherto appeared, underlying the course or argument pursued in this book. It appears to us to be twofold. In the first place, Dr. Martineau is apparently not inclined to admit that historical evidence can have any function whatever in relation to religion; in the second place, he not only perceives no deep religious significance, no high religious value for the training of man in the Christian doctrines of which the Incarnation is the basis, but he is apparently eager for their rejection as useless and mischievous lumber. We may close this essay with a word or two on each of these points.

According to Dr. Martineau, revealed religion is "strictly personal and individual, and must be born anew in every mind." Miracles can neither form part of a revelation nor attest one, especially when only reported, and the knowledge of them attained through evidence, more or less indirect. Revelation, being immediate and intuitive, has nothing to do with "what has happened, is happening, or will happen," neither in nature nor in history can evidence for religion be gained, unless the data are first imported into it by the religious mind. "Reasonings on nature without and

life within lead to explicit Theism, because they start from implicit Theism." Everything in religion depends upon its intuitive, immediate, and personal character. Our author indeed appears to question whether God can give us "a proper apocalypse"—*i.e.* a disclosure of eternal facts and realities, such facts of ultimate being as the constitution of the Godhead, or the eternal life of the Son of God. The paragraphs on this subject go to show that if it were possible for God to grant us such a revelation, it would be impossible for us to receive it, and in any case the media actually present are available only for the apprehension of moral and spiritual truth, inasmuch as they all resolve themselves into testimony.

"In order to bring upon the earth an adequate witness of such things, the incarnation of a Divine person has to be presumed; and that in its turn is a kind of fact which transcends all evidence, and which human testimony never can approach. An apocalypse of such things is incommunicable by veracity ever so faithful; to me who only hear it, it is simply a *reported vision*, not a discovery of *what is*; it takes me into the mind that has seen it, but it takes me not beyond. And even this it does, only by a *vote of confidence* in the seer, which rests on other grounds, and is resolvable at last into the authority of his moral and spiritual insight."

Now there is surely serious confusion here. We hold, as well as Dr. Martineau, that theology cannot be forced on men's minds by mere external authority. No *posse comitatus* can make me follow the reasoning of a proposition in Euclid; and no *mere* exhibition of supernatural power can compel my adherence to theological propositions, against which my moral or spiritual sense revolts. All true religion is personal, and that man's communion with God must be immediate and

direct, is involved in the very meaning of the terms. Neither prophet, priest, nor sage can do more than help me to draw near to God for myself; He alone with me alone; and all Divine truth, if it is to be assimilated, must awake an answering response within, a response which no overpowering exhibition of authority by itself could ever evoke. Thus far we are heartily in accord with the pure and spiritual teaching of Dr. Martineau. But why does it follow that I may not learn much concerning the nature and character of God from history, provided the historical evidence be adequate? "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them." A very large part of our spiritual knowledge comes to us thus, as Dr. Martineau would of course admit. Then—taking for granted for the moment the abstract possibility that God who spake in time past by the prophets could take upon Him our nature, and speak to us in his Son—what is there in the nature of historical evidence to prevent its doing its own work of establishing certain historical facts, such as, *e.g.* that Jesus of Nazareth lived such a life, spoke such words, performed such acts, died, and was afterwards seen by such and such men, in whom a certain remarkable spiritual change took place, and certain remarkable results in the history of religion followed? Suppose these facts proved, important corollaries follow regarding the person, character, and will of God, with whom I hold personal communion all the more close and immediate, because of the revelation of the Father made in Jesus Christ His Son our Lord.

But is the evidence adequate? There is the rub. We have first to ask, What evidence will be considered

adequate? Because, as a matter of fact, with many persons, Dr. Martineau probably among them, no amount of evidence conceivable would be considered adequate for the establishment of truths so stupendous as those which lie at the roots of Christian theology. No amount of testimony, so Dr. Martineau almost explicitly states, would suffice to make him believe in the doctrine of the Incarnation, in the miracles, Atonement, and Resurrection of Christ. With such persons it may well seem that no argument is possible. Nevertheless, we will essay to go one step further. Why does Dr. Martineau find no evidence adequate when other intelligences as vigorous and acute as his own, have rested their hopes entirely upon a belief in these truths, and have been satisfied with the evidence actually existing? The answer probably is, that to Dr. Martineau and others like him there appears to be no overwhelming need for such a revelation of God as Christianity implies, no unique religious value and power in the truths of Christianity which make it likely that God would so reveal Himself, no antecedent longings and yearnings for such truths as would make them prepared to receive and welcome such evidence as is forthcoming. Nay, so far from this, Dr. Martineau contemplates with relief and joy the prospect of being rid of the characteristic doctrines of Christianity as so much added weight, cumbersome to the Theist, and even injurious to the interests of pure religion. The conclusion ultimately reached at the end of this long book is this:—

"Christianity, as defined or understood in all the churches which formulate it, has been mainly evolved from what is transient and perishable in its sources, from what is unhistorical in its

traditions, mythological in its preconceptions, and misapprehended in the oracles of its prophets. From the fable of Eden to the imagination of the last trumpet, the whole story of the Divine order of the world is dislocated and deformed. . . . . To consecrate and diffuse, under the name of 'Christianity,' a theory of the world's economy thus made up of illusions from obsolete stages of civilisation, immense resources, material and moral, are expended, with effect no less deplorable in the province of religion than would be in that of science, hierarchies and missions for propagating the Ptolemaic astronomy, and inculcating the rules of necromancy and exorcism."

It is true that Dr. Martineau says he has reached this conclusion with "pain and dismay," but he would apparently exult in the overthrow of Christianity as at present understood. Elsewhere he says :—

"On this small and mistaken base there has been heaped up an immense and widening mass of Christian mythology, from the first unstable, and now at last apparently swerving to its fall. And let it fall, for it has corrupted the religion of Christ into an Apocalyptic fiction ; and that so monstrous in its account of man, in its theory of God, in its picture of the universe, in its distorted reflections of life and death, that if the belief in it were as real as the profession of it is loud, society would relapse into a moral and intellectual darkness it has long left, and the lowest element of modern civilisation would be its *faith*."

Now at last we are face to face with the issue. Dr. Martineau believes, as he has always believed, that the doctrines of orthodox Christianity are false. He finds that he cannot dissever them from the New Testament, and he has, therefore, set himself to prove that it possesses no religious authority, and that its testimony is untrustworthy. Has he succeeded ? In all probability he has more than succeeded with those who entered upon the inquiry with prepossessions similar to his own ; but there are no arguments in this

book which can avail with men who do not come to its consideration assured that no testimony can prove a miracle, and that the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement are vain and hurtful dreams. The battle of historical evidence must be fought out upon historical grounds, but the real issue, after all, concerns the essential value of the central doctrines of Christianity. Dr. Martineau despises them as mythology. It is not for us at the very close of an article to point out how infinitely our religious beliefs are deepened and enriched if in addition to bare Theism, we can see our way to accept the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection of Christ; nay, how absolutely essential these are to the spiritual requirements of man. We may, however, refer to the testimony of Mr. R. H. Hutton, whose evidence in this matter is the more important, because, owing to his Unitarian parentage and education, he so long rejected the doctrine of the Incarnation, and afterwards became convinced of his error. In his masterly essay on *The Incarnation and the Principles of Evidence*,[1] Mr. Hutton showed at length, from what we may call a Unitarian point of view, how much added light on God's essential nature, on the relation between God and man, on the present and the future life is afforded by "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

It would be out of place for us now to comment on this and show the force of Christ's words, "Believe in God, believe also in Me." But one thing we may say. We fearlessly appeal to history to confute the views of Dr. Martineau concerning the character and influence

[1] Reprinted in *Theological Essays*. Third edition. Revised. Macmillan & Co. See Essay No. viii. p. 241.

of the doctrines of Christianity. If there be a religion which has done aught to purify and regenerate the world, it is the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, as understood and expounded by generations of Christians, who, whatever their mistakes (and they have been many), their failures (and they have been numerous and grave), whatever their many differences of name and creed, have alike believed in "one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven." Christianity has done the noble work it has accomplished in the world by virtue of the very truths which Dr. Martineau is eager to banish as so much mischievous "mythology." It has triumphed because it has descended to man's lowest estate, met his deepest needs, purified his inmost heart, and given him utmost hope. And this has been done, not through the announcement of unimpeachable moral maxims, sublime spiritual truths, but because it has shown to men the mind and heart of God Himself, how utterly He hates their sins, how unspeakably He loves the sinners, so that He gave His only begotten Son, that all might live through Him.

If there has been any form of religious belief which history has proved to be morally impotent and spiritually sterile, it is that advocated by Dr. Martineau. Lofty in some respects indeed it is, and it contains a measure of religious truth of inestimable importance. But, taken alone, the abstract truths of bare Theism have not moved men's hearts, they have not satisfied the cravings of conscience, nor supplied a much-needed ethical dynamic; they have exercised no regenerating power over individuals or society; nor have they

proved their efficiency by success in active and abiding moral enterprise. The reason is simply that the Unitarian creed presents a lofty ideal without providing the means of realising it. Dr. Martineau, in the last sentence of his book, rejoices that he can look to Jesus of Nazareth as "the Prince of Saints, who reveals the highest possibilities of the human soul and their dependence on habitual communion between man and God." Men, stained with sin and struggling with temptation, cry out, not for a Prince of Saints, but for a Saviour of sinners. In the New Testament they find Him, and they will prefer the authority of the New Testament to the authority of Dr. Martineau. The Christianity that has saved millions of degraded and perishing men and women, turning them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, carries with it an authority and self-evidencing power of its own. Compared with it, the speculations of this volume are like the confused and impalpable forms of a troubled dream, which vanish in the calm, clear light of returning day.

IV.

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.

MR. FREDERIC HARRISON, in a recent address to that very select audience, the Positivist Society, dwelt in a suggestive way upon what he acknowledged to be a "religious reaction" during the last thirty or forty years, on certain changes of thought and feeling which had come over the country in that time, marked by a "tendency to revert to older aims and ideals." "The result has been," said Mr. Harrison, "a return to a new type of popular enthusiasm, and to a weak solution of attenuated theology." Not, he added, that any "men of sense" believed in mere earlier ideals of theological conceptions, but that, with or without reason, theological habits of thought were more potent than they were a generation ago. Mr. Harrison has seen, through his own inverted telescope, a fact which, seen with the naked eye, assumes much more significant proportions. We have no desire to magnify a feature of our time which Mr. Harrison, in our judgment, seriously minifies. Even he, however, is compelled to see that the current of thought in the closing years of the nineteenth century *is not* setting in, as Comte prophesied, to the utter extinction of theology and the enthronement of the Positivist *Grand Etre*. The return is not towards an "attenuated theology." On the other

hand, it is precisely among the strongest and most profound minds that the tendency Mr. Harrison has observed is visible—a tendency to revert from the views of the universe which largely prevailed in the seventies, when the influence of Mill and Bain, of Huxley and Tyndall, were all-prevalent in certain circles, to views of a much more distinctly theological cast. We say this, not as theologians, but as students of literature. Another hue has come over philosophy. Physical science has lost none of its value or interest, but it is falling into its due place in the hierarchy of knowledge. The philosophy, "falsely so called," which usurped the name of science and succeeded in identifying the valuable researches of the naturalist with the false and misleading theories supposed to be bound up with them, has been found out. A truer, deeper, more comprehensive "science," accepting all the sound conclusions of the physicist, is exposing the shallowness and ineffectiveness of the phenomenalism of which Comte was one of the chief priests, and the whole habit of thought and view of the universe implied in the Positivism which Mr. Harrison still so earnestly preaches, has been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

What has come, or is coming, in its place? Recent theological literature may afford some help in answering the question. Books like Dr. Fraser's Gifford Lectures on the *Philosophy of Theism*, Mr. Lindsay's *Recent Advances in Theistic Philosophy of Religion*, and Dr. S. Harris' *God the Creator and Lord of All*, are only specimens of a literature which has been accumulating upon us during the last few years with amazing rapidity. The meaning of this multiplication of works upon

Theism, and closely related subjects, is that philosophers and theologians are occupied in assimilating the immense amount of knowledge gathered in the regions of physical science during the last quarter of a century, and framing a *Weltanschauung*, a "view of God and the world," which shall do full justice to the claims of science, while keeping it in its due place in relation to the whole field of human knowledge and life. The works just named are diverse—they have been selected, indeed, because of their diversity—whilst each has a value of its own. Dr. Fraser is the most recent, and —it may be said without invidiousness—one of the very best of the growing company of Gifford lecturers. He gives us the ripe product of a lifetime of philosophical meditation; for his laurels were won long ago—though the rigorous thought and clear, effective style of these lectures might well argue that the writer was in the prime of his strength. Dr. Fraser's statement of what he calls "the ultimate problem" of human thought, his examination of the various materialistic, pantheistic, and other solutions of it current in our day, and his defence, in the fullest light of modern science and philosophy, of that theistic solution which seems to him the only one worthy of a rational being, are alike clear, cogent, and admirable. We cannot summarise his argument, though to some parts of it we shall allude shortly; suffice it to say, that it is conducted throughout without the faintest trace of dogmatism or obscurantism; the closeness of its reasoning is tempered by its clearness and attractiveness of style, and the thinker and the "general reader" will alike be interested in this noble "Apologia."

Mr. Lindsay has followed up his able little book on

The Progressiveness of Modern Christian Thought with a volume which deals with one section of the same subject in a much more elaborate way. His aim is indeed ambitious; for it is no slight task to pass in review the whole literature of Germany, France, England, and America dealing with these great central problems of thought and life. Mr. Lindsay, however, shows a knowledge of his subject quite encyclopædic in its character; the chief drawbacks in reading his pages being that his style is often involved and cumbrous, and that, as is natural with so omnivorous a reader, he too often gives us extracts from other authors, rather than the results to which his wide study has brought himself. Mr. Lindsay aims at proving the "progressiveness of Theism," and, in a very complete way, he shows how, in natural theology, in the study of the being and attributes of God, and in recent thought on the spiritual nature of man, his reason, personality, freedom, and higher affinities and needs, distinct and most important advances have been made in the direction of ethical Theism and Christianity.

Dr. S. Harris, Professor of Theology at Yale, is well known in this country by his works, *The Philosophical Basis of Theism* and *The Self-Revelation of God.* The two volumes entitled *God, the Creator and the Lord of All*, form a continuation of the argument begun in their predecessors. Professor Harris decribes the earlier books as dealing with "Fundamental Theology," while the present forms only a part of "Doctrinal Theology." The treatment is in the main that of the systematic theologian, and the ground covered includes the nature, the attributes, and the government of God. But this is no ordinary theological treatise, written for believing

students, or we should not have given it a place in this list. While all students of theology may benefit from the book, its standpoint is not that of the dogmatist, who proves his theses from recognised authorities, whether the Bible, the Creeds, or the Fathers. Dr. Harris meets all objectors and assailants upon the open field, shows himself well acquainted with the bearings of modern thought, and asks for no reception of his arguments, except in so far as they commend themselves to the instructed Reason, the only arbiter to which—in this portion of his book—he appeals. Instruction, however, is given, and that of the best kind, to readers who are prepared to accept the Christian Revelation; and some of the author's expositions of his great theme are amongst the fullest and best that we have ever seen.

Another book which might be named in this connection, though slight and popular in character, is Mr. Armstrong's *God and the Soul.* The author is a Unitarian minister, a reverent but not slavish disciple of Dr. Martineau, and he has essayed to popularise some of the more abstruse metaphysical arguments employed by theistic writers. In this he has proved himself—as in his previous booklet, *Man's Knowledge of God*—both able and successful. His lectures are interesting and occasionally eloquent. His argument is weakened through his not being able to complete it by its proper topstone, the doctrine of the Incarnation, but the spirit of the book (except, perhaps, in the last chapter, on the Bible) is excellent, and it deserves a place with the more substantial books we have named, as affording an illustration that reasoning, even upon the loftiest themes, may be made clear to the compar-

atively untrained mind, without any lowering either of the subject or the argument.

These books are obviously very different in authorship, treatment, and aims. But the Gifford lecturer, the Presbyterian minister, the American professor, and the Unitarian preacher agree in exhibiting to us the process by which there is being formed in our midst a Christian philosophy of religion. All these writers are well acquainted with scientific and philosophical thought; and in their method, all alike appeal to arguments based upon philosophical and scientific premises. The world of nature and the soul of man, the macrocosm and the microcosm and recognised facts in each—it is upon these foundations that the arguments here used are based. All these writers agree also in holding, and, as we think, in proving, that there is no need to "reconcile" science and religion, since these two, rightly understood, are but parts of one organic whole, each incomplete without the other, each helping and strengthening the other. It is their aim to show that there should be "no schism in the body," that the dualism in human thought and knowledge, which both scientists and theologians have often accepted and sometimes tried to emphasise and deepen, has sprung from a misunderstanding which they would fain do their part to remove. The work done by Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the third century —may we not say by St. Paul on the Areopagus long before?—needs to be done again and again in every generation. The structure of a truly Christian philosophy is never complete. Some part of it always needs repairing and renewing, and in some generations a whole section may need to be rebuilt. It is difficult

and often thankless work, this attempt to lay the whole field of secular knowledge under contribution and bring it into captivity to the obedience of God and of Christ. Philosophers sneer at the boldness of the devout enthusiast, whilst religious people often rebuke his alleged impiety. The Church is apt to prefer the fiery eloquence of Tertullian and the high ecclesiasticism of Cyprian to the broad spirit and various learning and calm wisdom exhibited by many of the Greek Fathers. The Church distrusts reason because it fears rationalism, and the philosopher distrusts religion because he despises superstition. The work of the Christian philosopher is to show the error of both extremes, and this work needs to be renewed in every generation, As the late Aubrey Moore—who did noble work in this field and was only prevented by early death from doing more—well said, at the close of his able essay in *Lux Mundi*, "Human nature craves to be both religious and rational, and the life which is not both is neither." It may be possible in this essay to give a few illustrations of the way in which the new light afforded by science and metaphysics is contributing to our knowledge of God, and may be used by the Christian theist in building up a truly Christian philosophy of religion.

A complete philosophy of religion should take account of the history of religions, and trace, so far as may be possible, their origin and the principles which have regulated their development. This part of the subject does not come within our scope, but it may be said, in passing, that evidence is accumulating which confirms the views of this subject usually taken by theists. The attempts made within the last quarter of a century to

explain the origin of religion by resolving it, with Mr. Herbert Spencer, into ancestor-worship, or with Tyler, into animism, or with Strauss, reviving the *timor fecit Deos* theory, which derives the noblest feelings and aspirations of man from the lowest, cowardly fear—have ignominiously failed. So has the attempt to trace a definite and orderly sequence of development in the so-termed fetichistic, totemistic, polytheistic, henotheistic, and monotheistic "stages" of religious growth. Little is known, indeed, by any one of the earliest stages of the history of religion, and some of the facts in the more clearly recognised historic stages are disputed. But light is beginning to dawn upon these dark places. The latest work on the subject is an *Introduction to the History of Religion*, by Professor F. B. Jevons, of the University of Durham, now occupying the Principalship of Hatfield Hall. He writes without theological prepossessions, and is a pronounced evolutionist. But he sees that, in this most complete of all histories, the law of progress from lower to higher forms of religious belief cannot be laid down in the baldly simple form which has been in favour with anthropologists. According to Dr. Jevons, the origin of religion is not to be found in magic or in priestcraft, in fanciful myths or craven terror of unseen powers. These may or may not accompany religion, they are all alike insufficient to account for it. Fetichism, he shows by arguments deserving careful study, is not a generating source of religious belief, but itself a degenerate or degraded form of previously existing religion. Principal Jevons holds that "from the beginning man recognised his dependence on a personal and supernatural will, and found a peculiar happiness in the recognition." At that early stage,

man was incapable of reasoning out his beliefs, but, with the facts of the universe around him, he responded to the tacit appeal which is therein made, and a sense of dependence and of obligation, sometimes passing into communion, was present in man's spiritual consciousness, though he by no means clearly realised what that consciousness implied. This immediate recognition of power, and, more or less clearly, of wisdom and love, in the universe around, constituted the origin of religion in the mind of man, though it always expressed itself in crude and inadequate forms, and too often degenerated into superstition, cruelty, and wrong.

It is clear that the conclusion which this able and dispassionate student has reached by a study of the very data on which anthropologists rely, is not far removed from the well-known description of St. Paul in the first chapter of the Romans. We do not assume that Dr. Jevons is right, but name the publication of his book as one among many signs that a theistic interpretation of the *history* of religion is more in favour than it was. Professor de la Saussaye, also one of the highest recent authorities on the Science of Religion, recognises the insufficiency of purely natural development to explain the phenomena of religion. This does not imply, however, a "primitive revelation" in the sense in which that phrase has often been understood by Christian orthodoxy. Neither the records of Genesis, nor any statements of the New Testament, require us to burden ourselves with hypotheses concerning the amount of religious knowledge possessed by Adam, theories which were framed with pious intent, but which have only cumbered the progress of Christian thought. But neither can we be called upon to accept hypotheses concerning the

state of prehistoric man and his religious history during subsequent ages which are not borne out by the facts thus far established. Those facts have yet to be sifted and arranged, and we are not disposed to regard any conclusions likely to be drawn from them as of supreme importance in our study of religion to-day. The end must explain the beginning, not the beginning the end. The acorn may be better understood by a study of the oak, the oak will not be more fully comprehended by an examination of the acorn. Still, it is satisfactory to convinced Theists to be told that such examination into the obscure origins of religion in the mind of primitive man as is now possible, finds the germs of man's noblest thoughts and loftiest worship, not in ignorance or in abject terror, but in primal feelings of wonder and of awe, of joyful aspiration and desire for communion with the unseen and unknown Power manifesting itself in the varied scenes of the visible universe. What those deep emotions meant primitive man can have only dimly apprehended, and the language of ceremonial or moral observance in which he expressed them during the ages naturally appears to us clumsy, gross, or childish. But the germ of a true knowledge of God, as manifested in nature and in man, was present, and in due time the tiny seed became a mighty tree.

It is with the knowledge of God to-day, not with the past history of that knowledge, that the Christian philosopher is chiefly concerned. That any such knowledge is possible is the first thing he has to prove; and the second, that true knowledge of God reveals that living, thinking, feeling, willing Personal God in whom the Theist believes, culminating in that consummate revelation of God Incarnate, which forms the central

verity of the Christian creed. With the arguments used to establish these various theses, we are not directly concerned; what we desire to point out is the present position of the argument, together with any special modifications of it which the recent history of science and philosophy has rendered necessary. As to the first point, and the supposed prevalence of Agnosticism, it may suffice to say that the whole Theistic army may walk in through the breach in his own walls which the Agnostic leader, Mr. Herbert Spencer, has made in his very description of the Unknowable. The one absolute, omnipresent Energy, operating in the world without us, and welling up in consciousness within, is described by Mr. Spencer almost in these words, and pronounced unknowable. But such a Being or Force is already tolerably well known to any philosopher who is aware of so much concerning it, and undertakes to pronounce that no man can be aware of anything more. This inconsistency on the part of Mr. Spencer has frequently been pointed out, and the fact to which we draw immediate attention is, that the inconsistency has borne fruit, and the effect of Spencerianism in the history of science has been to show how impossible it is to dispense with supersensible Reality. Call it only Reality, use the vaguest names and descriptions possible, there It is and must be. Spencer has made this plain, and thereby excited the frequently repeated ebullitions of Mr. Frederic Harrison's wrath. The result of his teaching has not been what Mr. Spencer intended, and his followers are perceiving that, to admit so much, means admitting much more. The flank of the Agnostic position has been turned, and the way prepared for any teacher who can prove, before

the bar of reason, his claim to say, "whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

With the so-called proofs of the being of a personal God which the Theist employs, we are only so far concerned as to point out the measure of their *present* cogency and any modifications in them which modern thought has rendered necessary or desirable. The arguments in question—the cosmological, teleological, and ontological demonstrations of the existence of God —are no longer urged as proofs of that which cannot be "proved." They remain of great value in their place, when their scope and limits are properly understood. But a deeper and truer view of the relation of God to the universe has brought Christian philosophers to see that a "demonstration" of the existence of the Ever-Present Ultimate Ground of all being is impossible. No categories of the logical understanding are wide enough or deep enough for the purpose, the conclusion is always much too vast for the premises. Man cannot argue up to the great First Cause, as he may apply the Method of Agreement or the Method of Difference to a series of physical phenomena, nor discuss the evidence of Divine design in nature as he would examine a machine of novel and ingenious construction. But this does not imply that the cosmological and teleological lines of argument are useless. They are analyses, more or less incomplete, of the rational elements in an already existing faith; or successive "waves" of thought, as Dr. Hutchison Stirling calls them, by which man is gradually raised Godwards. The great theistic postulate may be tested and verified by means of them; precisely as great fundamental assumptions in physical science are tested

and verified in actual experience; the only kind of "proof" which in either case is available. Prove that God is? But what is meant by the term "God"? And, if He be defined in a theistic sense, how can any series of arguments do more than show that along a number of lines of thought the facts of human experience point, with immense, cumulative, but not mathematically demonstrative force towards Him who is the Source of all life, the underlying Principle of all thought, and the Ever-present Ground of all being?

This change of front implies not loss, but gain. It means that the lingering traces of eighteenth century Deism are being removed, that the view of God as a Being apart from a certain cleverly constructed machine styled a Cosmos, an Artificer whose existence can be demonstrated from the ingenuity of the construction, is relinquished, and the immanence of God in creation as well as His transcendence above and beyond it, is being more fully apprehended. There may be danger of Pantheism in this insistence upon Divine immanence, just as a widely prevalent Deism arose in the eighteenth century from an excessive insistence upon His transcendence. But it is well to bear in mind that there is a truth in the heart of Pantheism of which Pantheists must not be allowed to possess the monopoly. And it is becoming increasingly clear that physical science on the one hand, and the tendency of the best psychology and metaphysics on the other, are compelling Christian theologians to modify their doctrine of God by laying greater stress upon His immanence in the universe. To modify, not essentially to alter it. The Theist alone can furnish a hypothesis adequate to explain the origin and history of the world;

the Christian Theist alone can present this fundamental truth in its complete and most adequate form. Thinkers of various types are falling back upon Theism, now that the poverty and emptiness of the Hegelian, the Spencerian, and other ideal substitutes for God is being more clearly discerned. But it is not precisely the Theism of the beginning of this century to which they turn. The Christian doctrine of God, as it is now understood, is the same in form and outline as it was fifty or a hundred years ago, but its content is richer, deeper, and more varied, as its foundations are more stable and its scope is wider and more comprehensive than that which sufficed for our fathers. As this statement is important in itself, and may not be at once accepted by all readers, it will be well to linger for a while upon its exposition.

Consider, for example, the tendency of the human mind to "anthropomorphism." This word has been very variously used in theistic controversy. The original and etymological meaning, of course, is the attributing to the Divine Being of human shape, making God in the likeness of men in the literal, outward, physical sense. But as applied by Agnostics, by way of objection against all forms of Theism, it has come not only to include anthropopathism, the attributing of human feelings to God, but to all reasoning from man to God whatsoever. All human ideas concerning God are held to be vitiated, simply because they are human, as the purity of sunlight is impaired by passing through dull or discoloured glass. Now taking anthropomorphism in the former of these two senses, no educated man could fall into such an error to-day; while, as to the second sense, it is obvious that

not only our thought concerning God to some extent receives its form from the human mind, but that the same is true of all our knowledge. Our theology is no more vitiated by that necessary condition than our science or our philosophy. But between these two extremes all shades of "anthropomorphism" are to be found. These are too numerous to specify; indeed it may be said that man's thought concerning God is perpetually oscillating between the tendency, on the one hand, to make Him too much a man, and, on the other, to empty the august name of God of its significance and value by undue abstraction. It is possible, and only too common, to rob God under the pretext of honouring Him, and to substitute a metaphysical abstraction, the Infinite or the Absolute, for the God who ever lives and loves—to worship a hollow, high-sounding name in place of the ἀληθινὸς θεός, the only real and true God, of the Bible. In the swing of the pendulum between these opposite extremes, however, the tendency of Christian habit, if not of Christian teaching, has been towards the former of the two. Authorised Christian teaching, it is true, has never regarded God as "a magnified non-natural man," though the charge has been freely made. But it may be admitted that in practice a tendency in the direction of undue "anthropomorphism" has sometimes been perceptible. The language of the Old Testament, valuable as it is for the revelation of a personal God which it expresses and enshrines, has been misunderstood. The doctrine of the Incarnation characteristic of the New Testament, also, has not always been stated with sufficient carefulness, so that Mr. Matthew Arnold's sneers at evangelical over-familiarity in the

use of the Divine name, and in describing the Divine Being, whilst far from being justifiable in the form he gave them, were not wholly without ground or warrant.

To redress the balance, if we may so speak—to correct this natural but mischievous tendency, a fuller revelation of God in nature has been vouchsafed to this generation. Our ideas concerning God are made up of what may be called cosmic and anthropic elements, drawn from our study of the world of nature and the world of man. The student of physical science is apt unduly to emphasise the former element, until the lineaments of a personal God are no longer discernible in such theology as he admits and retains. The Christian Theist has sometimes laid too great stress upon the latter element, and, as we have said, this bias is being rebuked and corrected by the discoveries of modern science. The problem of the present generation is to arrive at a just synthesis of the two, what Mr. Lindsay calls "a pure and worthy anthropo-cosmic Theism," which combines "the Aryan conception of God as Ground of the world of nature with the Semitic stress on a God who is Lord over nature and Father of spirits." The task set before the Christian Fathers of the fourth century was to show the relation between the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Man and Son of God, and that more general and indistinct revelation given in history, and in the best and wisest thoughts of men, and it was accomplished by the working out of Scripture teaching concerning the Logos, Lord of creation and Light of every man. A similar task is before the Christian teachers of to-day, and it must be similarly met. No new doctrine is required,

but a fuller development of certain parts of the old doctrine concerning God, so as to meet the demands made by that new knowledge of the universe which Christianity is called upon to assimilate and make her own. Such work needs to be carefully done, since others besides Ritschlians are found prepared to say that the Fathers of the fourth century adulterated Christian truth by the addition of Greek philosophy, rather than purified Greek philosophy by permeating it with Christian truth, and the influence of physical science upon religious thought needs to be carefully watched. Other dangers might be mentioned attending this new synthesis or work of reconstruction, but it is being attempted, and many volunteer leaders are undertaking to show us the way.

But is such synthesis possible? Can the ground of all being, the omnipresent Energy revealed by science, be shown to be one with the personal Ruler of men, the Father of spirits, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? This is denied in many quarters. These are said to be two incompatibles. An "Infinite Personality" is declared to be a contradiction in terms. We cannot serve two masters; hence the scientific man holds to the Infinite Energy which he sees in nature, and despises the Personal God of whom he reads in the Bible; while the devout Christian is loyal to the Father-God whom Christ reveals, and seldom troubles his mind about "processes of nature," which are doubtless under Divine government, but which belong to a wholly different field. Christian philosophy of religion aims at putting an end to this dualism, whether consciously or unconsciously held. It does so in the first place, as we have said, by laying stress on the

immanence of God in the universe. But what is meant by this oft-repeated phrase? For one thing, whereas the modern physicist materialises spirit, the Christian philosopher spiritualises matter. What is matter? Physics and metaphysics alike are proving to us that, in the last analysis, matter is resolvable into force, and behind such force must be mind. The old Greek notion, derived from the East, of a certain ὕλη, a dark, gross, intractable substance forming the material, so to speak, of which the world is made, and in which lies the explanation of all evil, disappears before modern atomic research. Matter is alive, not dead; and through all the inorganic, as well as the organic world, there throbs a pulse, which modern science is enabling us to hear and feel, a pulse that beats regularly with a rhythm which we can detect and follow; and the Theist has been showing that the rhythm of that mighty pulse proves the indwelling of the living God. Some unconscious paganism has lingered in the way Christians have thought of "nature," as if it lay but partially within the domains of Deity; governed by God, indeed, as all things are, but controlled by Him as some behemoth or leviathan, led "by a hook in the jaws," rather than instinct with living energy, which He Himself continually imparts. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is true in a deeper sense than men could understand when they dwelt upon the visible world as a finished construction of infinite skill, rather than as the living robe which God is ever weaving for Himself, a vital organism in which the living God continually energises.

It is clear, further, that the immanence of God in the universe implies a continuous and progressive

revelation of Himself in the world. To avoid the pantheistic tendencies which such a phrase suggests, it must be remembered that Theism is based on the belief that God is above the world, has created the world, and, as free cause, intervenes from without in the history of the world. Moreover, in the world of mankind, account must be taken of free agents, to whom, within fixed limits, the power of choice and self-determination has been granted. Still, it is being increasingly felt that, what is specially needed at this moment is not an insistence upon the miraculous and exceptional action of the Divine Being in relation to men, so much as an adequate interpretation of the world as it is here and now, as it has been, according to the teaching of science, with the laws which regulate the development both of its cosmic and anthropic elements. Such an interpretation is being freely given by materialists and agnostics; Theism can never expect to be triumphant over these antagonists until it has furnished another interpretation of physical facts and human history, which shows God in the midst of the world as it is, ruling, controlling, directing, interpenetrating all, until it is made plain that such a theistic interpretation is not only more rational than its rivals, but the only one which a rational being can rationally hold.

The appeal here is clearly made to reason. It must be so, if the word "reason" is rightly understood and the conditions of the appeal kept fairly in mind. No other arbiter can ever determine this suit. A little or superficial knowledge of philosophy, as Lord Bacon said, may incline the mind of man to Atheism, but "a farther proceeding therein doth bring the mind back to re-

ligion." It is a mark of scepticism, not of religion, to distrust reason. God is Reason, absolute, perfect, universal. Man as rational is made in the likeness of God, and knows God precisely in proportion as he uses this God-given organ of knowledge. It is needless to say that by "reason" we do not mean the logical understanding only. Reason includes what is often called faith. It includes all the manifold processes—intuitive, empirical, reflective, logical, ethical, emotional—by which man arrives at truth. These are so far the heritage of the race that their essential "reasonableness" can be shown to all competently-trained minds, and the ultimate appeal in all controversies concerning the interpretation of the world must be made to this many-sided Reason. Professor Harris thoroughly understands this, and often insists upon it in his work on the Christian doctrine of God. One of the finest chapters in his book is that upon "God is a Spirit—Reason." Early in his exposition he lays it down that

> "Revelation is the revelation of the highest reason to rational man. Man as rational must receive and interpret it. Revelation is of reason to reason. It is no revelation except as there is reason to interpret it; it remains unintelligible."

In another place he describes "the fundamental principle of all true theology, the truth that the universe is ultimately grounded in reason, not in will independent of reason and above it." The timid theologian who is alarmed by this language will be reassured by the author's treatment of the subject later on. In criticising the Unitarian doctrine of "the supremacy of reason over all Church organisations, over

all books," Dr. Harris says: "The error here is not in the ultimate appeal to reason, but in excluding the conditions essential to the knowledge of objective reality through the exercise of reason," and he proceeds to give at some length an admirable little disquisition on the difference between the use of reason in reasoning and its abuse in Rationalism.

But this by the way. The importance of the fundamental principle just laid down appears when we come to establish the theistic interpretation of the world against all others. Common ground must somehow be secured. It is found in this, that no hypothesis can be entertained which implies our being put to permanent intellectual confusion. This is the fundamental postulate of all science. Else all scientific knowledge becomes impossible. This is the only postulate the Theist need claim in the controversy; and, if it be once granted, its application to the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual worlds will lead up to all that the Christian Theist desires to secure. That is a large statement; its proof forms the substance of the Christian philosophy of religion. The study is a fascinating one, but instead of ourselves giving an exposition of its methods, let the following extract from Professor Harris furnish a passing glimpse into some of them:—

"Theistic Realism is the doctrine that the reality of human knowledge necessarily presupposes, as its only reasonable basis, the existence of God and the likeness of man to Him in his rational constitution. Human knowledge presupposes that the universe is constituted intelligible, susceptible of being known by the human mind. When the universe or anything in it is studied, it is found to be constituted scientifically, so that the

knowledge of it, when expressed and vindicated in words, is found to be science. If the science had not first been expressed in the universe, the human mind could never have read it there and recorded it in a scientific treatise. This implies that the absolute power that reveals itself energising in the universe, sustaining and evolving it, is enlightened and directed by reason, the same in kind with human reason in its essential and constituent principles and characteristics as reason. It is, therefore, identical with what the Theist calls God, and the existence of God and of man in His likeness is the necessary presupposition of the reality of human knowledge. Any power enlightened by reason is self-directive and self-exertive — a personal being. Reason is everywhere and always the same in kind; otherwise knowledge is impossible."

These general principles may be applied, and Dr. Harris does apply them with great skill and force, to physical science, to ethics, to æsthetics, to the knowledge of the good and to all belief in human progress. It becomes possible to trace out the unity and continuity of the universe as progressively realising a grand archetypal ideal of reason. "Science discovers that the universe is thus progressive in the unity and continuity of a reasonable system toward the realisation of an archetypal reasonable ideal." The progress may be traced from the homogeneous nebulous stuff from which as a beginning science traces the genesis of the physical universe, up to the appearance of rational beings. Such beings are made in the likeness of God, who is Spirit, and capable of reading His thoughts after Him as He has expressed them in what we call the material universe, which, nevertheless, in its ultimate constitution, testifies to an indwelling Spirit. The end contemplated in such "archetypal ideal" of reason may be described in Dr. Harris's own words:—

"Thus we discover an end worthy of the existence of the universe, in the progressive development of the kingdom of God, which consists of finite rational persons in the process of education to know God and to serve Him, in unity with God and with one another in the life of love, and for ever advancing under God's guidance and influence, in spiritual development, knowledge, and power. When we think of this education and development of rational and immortal beings going on in innumerable worlds, and constituting the kingdom of God, increasing in glory through endless time, we certainly perceive the universe in the unity and continuity of a rational system progressively realising a grand ideal worthy of God. On the contrary, physical science, when not recognising God, is driven to the conclusion that in the evolution of the universe there is a continuous waste of energy, which sooner or later must issue in the cessation of all life and motion, and our universe will become and remain a silent, motionless, dark and frozen mass."

We have not touched upon controverted questions raised by the free use of the word "evolution" in this discussion. From our present point of view these are comparately unimportant. It is well understood now that the ideas which the word evolution contains are not to be annexed by the particular theories with which in the first instance it was closely associated. Theistic evolution is as possible as materialistic evolution, and much more rational. Whether the continuity in the development of the ordered universe was as close and unbroken as some contend, is a detail; important enough in its place, and one upon which the last word has not yet been said. But continuity there is and must be, and it is in this that the significance of the history is to be largely discerned. A Christian Theist, who believes in miracle and Divine intervention, need not hesitate to admit this. The modern mind shrinks from the idea of a God who is chiefly revealed, as

Professor H. Drummond expressed it, "in gaps." An ultimate rationale of this ordered universe as an organic whole is what our generation craves, and no more conclusive proof of the statement could be given than the widespread popularity of Professor Drummond's own books, in spite of serious defects which have again and again been pointed out by high authorities in science and theology. Such an ultimate rationale is only to be found, as Mr. Lindsay says, in

> "theistic evolution, in which the presence of a spiritual agency renders explicable the order of the organic world, the continuous character of the results of its growths amid variation, and other phenomena which no other hypothesis has been able to explain."

As upon the physical, so also upon the metaphysical side. Christian philosophy has always contended, but never with so great cogency and success as to-day, that personality, being the highest category of being known to man, must be predicable of God. Metaphysicians have been more or less led astray by such maxims as Spinoza's *Omnis determinatio est negatio*, and have maintained that personality as a form of determination implies limitation and cannot be predicated of the Infinite. An infinite person is difficult indeed to conceive, and the attempt may seem doomed to end in the ignoring either of the personality or the infinitude. But closer examination, in the light of the best modern psychology, shows that these views are mistaken. Personality, says Mr. Lindsay,

> "is that which gives to man his unity as an unanalysed self or individual consciousness; its active elements are knowledge or intelligence, feeling or sensibility, and will or volition; and its

implicates are inclusiveness of self-consciousness and self-determination or freedom."

Unity in self-consciousness, the possession of knowledge, feeling, and will, the power of self-determination —does the ascribing of these faculties to the Deity, or the refusal to do so, constitute an unworthy limitation of His Being? That there are limits to *human* personality is well known, but the positive characteristics above mentioned do not constitute limits in themselves, and, as Lotze has pointed out in often-quoted words, the Divine personality is the only personality fully worthy of the name; it is the full light of which the human is but a pale reflection.

Yet what marvellous light human personality, with all its imperfections, casts upon the problems with which we are now engaged. How impossible it seems in the abstract for an independent being to sustain finite and dependent things, without thereby becoming dependent upon them and losing its identity. Yet this seeming impossibility is solved every moment in the familiar facts of our own personal life. As Mr. Illingworth has well expressed it in his Bampton Lectures—

"As persons we are identical in the midst of change, and on account of our identity we are potentially infinite; for we can progressively appropriate the things and influences outside us, and so transform them, from being limits, into manifestations of ourselves. . . . We enter spiritually into the alien forms of being that surround us, without losing our identity the while; and so, instead of melting away into modes of them, we make them additional modes of us. . . . Thus though, as finite beings, we too are limited by the outer world, as persons, we can gradually make that world into our own; abolish, as it were, its externality, and make it internal to ourselves; a world within us, instead of without us, in which we are no longer slaves, but

free. Following this analogy, then, we can conceive of an Infinite Being as One whose only limit is Himself, and who is, therefore, self-determined, self-dependent, self-identical; including the finite, not as a necessary mode, but as a free manifestation of Himself, and thus, while constituting its reality, unaffected by its change—in other words, as an Infinite Person."

If we will but consider the infinitude of God as it ought to be considered, not quantitatively but qualitatively, it will be seen that so far from personality limiting infinitude, it is the highest—the only real form of infinitude known to us. It is the tendency of man to conceive infinity as limitless extension in space, and personality as identified with human nature localised in a pigmy body; hence an infinite person is obviously inconceivable, *i.e.* incapable of being pictured to the imagination. But that is not the true meaning of conception, and a truer appreciation of the meaning of personality puts to flight all these superficial objections, and makes it plain that there can be no degradation of the Divine Being under pretext of honouring Him, like the denial of his personality. Recent philosophy of Theism, as Mr. Lindsay shows at length, finds

"the beginnings of this personality in the ontological proof of perfect being, gathers strength for its conclusion in the apparent cosmological craving for will as the originative force or power, gains confirmation from the intelligence that marks the teleological reasoning, and reaches the highest seal of self-existent personality in the evidences of man's mind and of moral law."

So cogent has this reasoning proved itself that Mr. Herbert Spencer, the apostle of the Unknowable, has affirmed concerning the omnipresent energy manifest in all being, that the choice concerning its nature "lies

between personality and something higher—a mode of being as much transcending intelligence and will as these transcend mechanical motion." We have heard much among latter-day philosophers of this "supra-personal" nature of the Ground of all being. But man refuses thus to be cheated out of his inheritance, or to give up the substance of Personality for the shadow of Supra-personal Existence. These high-sounding phrases do but plunge us again in the unsubstantial and bottomless abysses of the unknowable, and virtually dismiss God from human thought altogether. A supra-personal absolute is a negation indeed without relation to nature or to man; and a being so defined is beneath, not above, the category of human personality.

Such are the lines along which in our time Christian philosophy lays the foundations of its intellectual structure. The next stages in the building, which lie beyond our present scope, have to do with two main topics. It is necessary in the first place to meet the objections and difficulties which gather round the theistic interpretation of the world; and, in the second, to show how that interpretation can only be completed—we may say only made fully intelligible — by the Christian revelation. The difficulties which have gathered round various central points of exposition are well known; some of these have been successfully removed, others are of perennial recurrence. It forms no valid objection to any interpretation of the world that it does not explain all difficulties; the very conditions of the problem imply that our grasp of such an interpretation can only be gradual and progressive. What we desire to know is that we are on the right track. And recent

philosophy of religion makes it plain that, whether with reference to Darwinian theories of natural selection, or the connection of man with the animal world, or the origin of morals and the existence of evil, or the prevalence and significance of pain, or a score of kindred subjects that might be named, the solution of apparently intractable problems is steadily proceeding. We can say no more than that it is proceeding, that Theism is successfully grappling with difficulties which perhaps can never be wholly removed; and with such a measure of success the scientific man on the ground of his science, and the Theist on the ground of his faith, ought to be content.

It is impossible to avoid a passing reference to the culmination and consummation of theistic philosophy in Christianity. So high a theme cannot be treated at the close of an essay. But readers of Professor Harris's volumes will find a chapter on the doctrine of the Trinity, which admirably illustrates the kind of treatment of Christian doctrine to which we refer. The doctrine of the Trinity, it is said, is a mystery. True, but the phrase in the mouth of the Christian should never be used as if it were synonymous with Mr. Spencer's Unknowable. Mystery does not imply that an object is absolutely unintelligible, but that our knowledge of it is compassed with certain limitations which have not been—perhaps which cannot at present be—transcended. We may know at least thus much concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, that, if it be true, it sheds a flood of light upon certain dark places in the views of Divine Personality as propounded by pure Theism; that it enables man to steer clear at the same time of the Scylla of Deism and the Charybdis of Pan-

theism; and we may add, that in our own estimation at least, those who on other grounds believe in a personal God can hardly stop short of a doctrine of Incarnation, such as that with which the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is intimately bound up, and from which, as matter of fact, it takes its rise.

Here this sketch must close. But even this inadequate exposition of one kind of task which the Christian theology of to-day is called upon to perform will not have been written in vain if it serve to show the importance of that task and to interest a few readers more deeply in it. It is said that "theology is killing religion." If religion is dying, which we doubt—perhaps it never was so vigorous—it is not theology, but the lack of theology which is killing it. Theology of the right kind, itself alive and in living contact with the facts of nature and of human life, and with the problems which arise out of them, is the very nerve of religion. Feeling is good, action is better, but both feeling and action without thought are blind and helpless. The Christian Church needs to think more deeply as well as to feel more earnestly and act more strenuously. The philosophy of religion is but one side of religion, and, from certain points of view, a comparatively unimportant side. Philosophy never yet saved a man nor purified even a corner of the world. None the less, inasmuch as these great problems of human thought are being grappled with by powerful minds which do not acknowledge the sway of Christianity, Christian teachers must be prepared to show, as was St. Paul in writing to the Colossians, that in Christ are "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." These hidden treasures are not beyond our reach. They

belong to us and to our children, they constitute a part of the riches of the Christian inheritance, and all that is necessary for their unfolding, is the scribe "instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven," who knows how to bring out of this treasure-house "things new and old."

V.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

WHEN the history of English thought in the nineteenth century comes to be written, it will be seen that its closing years were years of preparation for theological reconstruction. Not that the earlier generations had witnessed any widespread undermining of the Christian faith, still less any serious demolition of the structure. On the contrary, the quickening of religious life which began with the Oxford Movement in the thirties, and an increased activity amongst Evangelical Nonconformists, have together formed a wave of religious influence which has gathered rather than decreased in volume as the century has been drawing to a close. But it is a proverbial saying that a cathedral is never finished. To such a building there is always something to be done. Sometimes no more than the completion of an unfinished tower, or the restoration of damaged carving, sometimes the interior of nave or chancel requires renewal, or the whole west front must be strengthened or repaired. As with the sanctuary, so with the creed. It is undeniable, we think, that a certain disintegration of religious faith has been in progress for more than a generation, seriously affecting large numbers of the more thoughtful amongst the community, and indirectly influencing

many more who have been vaguely disquieted rather than deeply disturbed. It was, perhaps, impossible that such a rapid increase of secular knowledge should take place, such changes in prevailing views on questions of physical science, such a veritable revolution in the view taken of nature and man's place in nature, such an extension of biblical research and criticism, without some corresponding changes in theology and religion. When it is remembered that, amongst the leaders of thought in the latter half of the century, some of the most prominent have been Stuart Mill, Carlyle, Huxley, Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, and, in other departments, George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, the fact of such disintegration becomes obvious. The influence of such writers as these has been at the same time an effect and a cause of a disturbance in religious belief, which has been none the less serious, though it may have been less alarming, because, for the most part, it has taken place beneath the surface, instead of outwardly altering the substance of an accepted creed.

Signs are rapidly multiplying that the period of disintegration is coming to an end and a period of reconstruction beginning. The representatives of physical science on the one hand, and revolutionary biblical critics on the other, have had full opportunity to declare themselves and the faith or no-faith that was in them. Thirty years ago they complained that their case could not be fully heard because of the dogmatism of theologians and the invincible prejudices of those who had been bred and brought up upon theological dogmatism. Now they have been heard at large, they have had a fair field, and perhaps some extra favour shown to them to make up for previous neglect.

The critics of traditional religious belief, both from the side of literature and of science, have furnished their contribution to the knowledge of the time, a contribution in many respects very valuable, from which the generation has learned much, and for which it should be duly grateful. But now that time enough has elapsed for the full scope of their teaching to be seen, now that it is possible to measure its weakness as well as its strength, its limitations as well as its excellence, the most intelligent among their disciples are beginning to weigh them in the balances and find them wanting. The truth they have been able to teach remains, and mankind is richer for it. But it is not the whole truth. It cannot stand alone, it is not a Gospel by which man can live and die, and the time has come when on both sides it is being seen that the new truth can only do its work by being taken up into that larger whole of which it forms but a subsidiary part. Older forms of truth have here and there to be modified, but they will become the stronger for the wholesome and inevitable change, as "the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns." Reconstruction has hardly yet commenced, but the way is being prepared for it, and the twentieth century will find the structure of Christian faith more firmly founded, more widely extended, and more abundantly enriched and strengthened than ever before in the history of Christendom.

Amongst the recent signs of such a process in this country—standing, however, by no means alone—are two books which it is instructive to place side by side, Mr. A. J. Balfour's *Foundations of Faith* and Mr. G. J. Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*. One is written by perhaps the most brilliant and popular of contem-

porary statesmen, the other by one of the most accomplished students of physical science, whose career was recently cut short by death while he was yet in his prime. Neither is the work of a theologian. Both are the products of minds essentially critical, Mr. Balfour being a philosophical sceptic, Mr. Romanes a scientific sceptic. Yet both make more or less clear the true groundwork of faith, and accomplish this in a way which is the more satisfactory to a believer because it is not his own way. They furnish independent testimony to truths which the theologian might proclaim, and has proclaimed, in vain. They show the working of two representative minds in our day, minds more highly trained, more able, more far-seeing than the average amongst men of culture, but none the less representative because they are leaders of a vanguard rather than members of the rank and file of an army. Christian apologists could not accept the precise standpoint of either; but it is this very fact which gives to both books an interest and a value of their own. The present essay will attempt to estimate the significance of these two highly noteworthy volumes, indicating as they do in different ways how the foundations of Christian faith may be more broadly and securely laid in relation to the philosophical and scientific thought of the time.

Mr. Balfour's book has been so widely read that it is hardly necessary to describe its contents. It undertakes, unsystematically but by no means superficially, to analyse the grounds of prevalent beliefs on the deepest questions of human thought. Certain modes of looking at the great World-Problems are dominant amongst us; Mr. Balfour asks whether they are

adequate and satisfactory, and if not, in what respects they are deficient. He does not undertake to construct, as well as to criticise, though he does furnish some suggestions towards a provisional philosophy which may afford, as he thinks, a less one-sided and superficial treatment of these fundamental and important themes. The particular system which is chiefly examined is one which "under many names numbers a formidable following, and is in reality the only system which ultimately profits by any defeats which Theology may sustain," known as Agnosticism, Positivism, or Empiricism, but styled throughout by Mr. Balfour as Naturalism. Its leading doctrines are that we may know phenomena, but nothing beyond them. Whatever there may or may not be beyond these, they constitute the World for us, the only world of which we can have any cognisance, "that which is revealed to us through perception, and which is the subject-matter of the Natural Sciences." In this field only is true knowledge to be attained, and in this department only can reason be reasonably and fruitfully exercised. Such at least are the claims of this widely prevalent system of belief, and with an examination of these claims the former part of Mr. Balfour's book is occupied, and from such a system as a background he indicates what appears to him to form a more excellent way.

The book falls naturally enough into four parts, though these are avowedly not arranged in logical order. The first part describes "Some Consequences of Belief," tests Naturalism, that is, by its consequences in ethics, æsthetics, and other regions of thought and practice. The second part deals with "Some Reasons for Belief," and examines more directly the philosophic

basis of Naturalism, Idealism, and Rationalist orthodoxy. The third part is headed "Some Causes of Belief," and seeks to show that a large part of our belief has no rational basis, but depends upon authority or custom. The last portion of the book is described as "Suggestions towards a Provisional Philosophy," and contains, amongst more general discussions, some hints as to the way in which a provisional unification of our beliefs concerning the universe may be formed, such unity, however, being, as Mr. Balfour frequently reiterates, partial and provisional only, nothing more than this being attainable, at all events in the present state of our knowledge. The book is brilliantly written. It abounds in acute, sparkling, epigrammatic criticism, and though somewhat provokingly unsystematic, its literary ability, its numerous digressions and side-issues, its fresh and vigorous treatment of highly abstract questions, its humour and irony, its frequent illustrations and finished style, make it much more likely to be read than elaborate dissertations on similar subjects.

The history of Mr. Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion* is very different. It was not prepared for the press by the author. Some years ago, however, Mr. Romanes published anonymously a book which made considerable stir and which was thought to have proved damaging to orthodox religion, entitled *A Candid Examination of Theism*, by "Physicus." The very decidedly sceptical position taken up in this work Mr. Romanes came, in course of time, to abandon. Some indications of this change of attitude were found in certain articles published in the *Nineteenth Century*, entitled "The Influence of Science upon Religion." The writer's mind was, however, moving steadily forward in the direction of the faith

which his scientific studies in the earlier part of his life had caused him to forsake, and he was preparing for publication a sequel to his former treatise, to be entitled *A Candid Examination of Religion*, by "Metaphysicus." This work was only partially complete, when the writer's successful career, still bright with further promise, was cut short at the age of forty-six. His friend, Canon Gore, who knew well the history of his mind, and was left his literary executor, thought it due to his memory to publish such MSS. as would indicate the change of view which Mr. Romanes did not live to make known to the world. He has, therefore, printed together in this volume the conclusion to the work of "Physicus," describing the position taken by Mr. Romanes in 1876, extracts from the articles above mentioned showing the point he had reached before 1889; and last, and chiefly, such portions of the work on which the author was engaged at the time of his death as could be made at all fit for publication. Happily these fragments tell their own story with tolerable fulness. Canon Gore has appended a few explanatory notes, but for the most part he allows his friend to speak for himself and portray a remarkable and very significant mental history. Mr. Romanes by no means recants his earlier views. His opinions on scientific matters remain substantially the same to the end; the progress is discernible in the admission of certain important modifications which change altogether the relations between science and religion in the writer's mind. His latest utterances do not exhibit him as an orthodox Christian; but he came first to see that it was "reasonable to be a Christian believer," and he was recovering the personal activity and enjoyment of Chris-

tian faith when his last illness overtook him. Mr. Gore says that his friend "returned before his death to that full deliberate communion with the Church of Jesus Christ which he had for so many years been conscientiously compelled to forego. In his case the 'pure in heart' was, after a long period of darkness, allowed in a measure before his death to 'see God.'"

It will readily be seen in what sense these two books are to be considered together. Mr. Balfour describes in the abstract what Mr. Romanes illustrates in the concrete. In both cases we are, first of all, presented with a belief in the conclusions of physical science as an adequate explanation of all that we can know concerning the ordered universe, the teachings of religion being held to be baseless and untrustworthy. In both cases—Mr. Balfour performing the work of criticism from without, and Mr. Romanes conducting a similar process from within—the position of "Naturalism" is found to be inadequate and unsatisfying. And in both cases a movement is indicated rather than accomplished towards a more positive and satisfactory mode of viewing these ultimate World-Problems. Neither Mr. Balfour nor Mr. Romanes definitely undertakes the work of construction, but both are feeling their way towards it. An examination of two such books side by side can hardly fail to be instructive. We shall attempt, so far as space permits, not only to exhibit the cogency of their critique of Agnosticism, but to indicate where and why their constructive work halts where it does. The mental process sketched in both books alike may prove a true *præparatio evangelica* such as many in this unsettled but by no means irreligious generation are wistfully seeking.

There can be no question that Mr. Balfour is strongest in criticism. His mind is essentially sceptical in its cast. The present volume does but carry on the work which was begun in his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, and the danger in both books is lest the critic should overreach himself and leave the uncomfortable impression that he has proved too much. The general reason of mankind is aware that it is unreasonable to use reason to undermine reason. But we may thankfully accept criticism so long as it is assailing current plausible assumptions, and it will be time enough to cry Halt! when it begins to saw away the bough on which itself is resting.

The first contribution of value made by Mr. Balfour to the discussion lies in his showing that the real difficulty in the way of most unbelievers lies in certain preconceptions, certain modes of looking at world-problems, certain attitudes of mind, "psychological climates," which render them unconsciously impervious to religious considerations and arguments which may be addressed to them. "The decisive battles of theology are fought beyond its frontiers." Judgments on theological problems are decided beforehand by conceptions which appear to have little connection with theology or religion. Are these justifiable? A momentous question, which few Agnostics have fairly put to themselves. The one enormous assumption that there can be no valid knowledge beyond that which is gained by the use of such methods as are available in physical science is responsible for a large proportion of current unbelief. Yet it passes with the majority as an axiom, unquestioned, as undeniable as it is unprovable. Mr. Balfour's first assault upon it is based upon the consequences to which it leads. He acknowledges that this is not

logically in order; that a critic should begin with examining the foundations, not the issues and results, of any system with which he has a quarrel. But, practically, the order is effective and unobjectionable. Accordingly the first chapter shows whither this mode of regarding the universe leads us in the sphere of morals. The ethics of Naturalism, he holds, will not bear examination. According to its teaching, "the coarsest appetites, the most calculating selfishness, and the most devoted heroism are all sprung from analogous causes and evolved for similar objects," and "the august sentiments which cling to the ideas of duty and sacrifice are nothing better than a device of Nature to trick us into the performance of altruistic actions." A Kant may compare the moral law to the starry heavens and find them both sublime; "it would on the naturalistic hypothesis be more appropriate to compare it to the protective blotches on a beetle's back and to find them both ingenious." If we follow the teaching of Naturalism to its issues in ethics, man is no longer the final cause of the universe, the heaven-descended heir of all the ages. "His very existence is an accident, his story a brief and transitory episode in the life of one of the meanest of planets." We can know nothing of the causes which have converted a dead organic compound into the living progenitors of humanity, "enough that from such beginnings famine, disease, and mutual slaughter, fit nurses of the future lords of creation, have gradually evolved, after infinite travail, a race with conscience enough to feel that it is vile, and intelligence enough to know that it is insignificant."

By a similar process of *reductio ad absurdum* in æsthetics and other departments of human life, Mr.

Balfour pours scorn upon naturalistic hypotheses. More effective even than his caustic contempt is the underlying argument that a theory which brings us to such results by a carefully conducted process of reasoning must have missed its way from the outset. "If Naturalism be true, or rather if it be the whole truth, then is morality but a bare catalogue of utilitarian precepts; beauty but the chance occasion of a passing pleasure; reason but the dim passage from one set of unthinking habits to another. All that gives dignity to life, all that gives value to effort, shrinks and fades under the pitiless glare of a creed like this." In drawing his deductions at this stage, however, Mr. Balfour is duly cautious. He has no complaint against science. Crimes have been wrought in the sacred name of Liberty, but the deliverer of the oppressed is not responsible for these. Absurdities which outrage man's higher reason and moral sense are propounded in the name of Science, but it is not fair to make her responsible for them. Mr. Balfour claims to have proved that a purely empirical theory of things cannot be accepted as an adequate account of the ordered universe, and this is fatal to Naturalism, but it does not touch one of the conclusions of science. It is a *theory* of science, a false philosophy based upon science, which is here in question—quite another matter. "Science preceded the theory of science, and is independent of it. Science preceded Naturalism, and will survive it." What Mr. Balfour very justly complains of is that Naturalism, the theory which claims that we can know nothing beyond phenomena, should ventur to speak in the name of science and arrogate to itsel a credit which does not belong to it. That such

rationalistic theory "should develop into Naturalism and then, on the strength of labours which it has not endured, of victories which it has not won, and of scientific triumphs in which it has no right to share, presume, in spite of its speculative insufficiency, to dictate terms of surrender to every other system of belief, is altogether intolerable. Who would pay the slightest attention to Naturalism if it did not force itself into the retinue of science, assume her livery, and claim, as a kind of poor relation, in some sort to represent her authority and to speak with her voice?" This is a question which theologians have been asking for some time in vain. If Mr. Balfour, as statesman and man of the world, can gain a hearing for this most reasonable plea, it will be well for many who are unconsciously confusing science with a parasite which lives upon its substance and sucks away no small portion of its strength.

Mr. Balfour's examination of the philosophic basis of Naturalism is very acute, but we cannot describe it in detail. He claims to show that the theory of the universe which depends for its premises in the last resort upon the particulars revealed to us in perceptive experience alone cannot be trusted. He points out "the incongruity of a scheme of belief whose premises are wholly derived from witnesses admittedly untrustworthy, yet which is unable to supply any criterion, other than the evidence of these witnesses themselves, by which the character of their evidence can in any given case be determined." In brief, argues Mr. Balfour, science is unable to provide it own philosophic basis. The attempt to provide such a basis in atomistic materialism fails as signally as the attempt to resolve

nature into a series of fleeting subjective impressions made upon a "mind" as little explicable as the "matter" from which it is supposed to be deduced, or of which it forms another aspect. "Space, time, matter, energy, cause, quality, idea, perception—all these, to mention no others, are expressions without the aid of which no account could be given of the circle of the sciences; though every one of them suggests a multitude of speculative problems, of which speculation has not as yet succeeded in giving us the final and decisive solution." Let us, however, proceed to watch Naturalism at work upon man's beliefs concerning the genesis and history of the universe. Its natural ally, its parent or its legitimate offspring, according as it is viewed as cause or effect, is Rationalism. This word has been very variously understood, but Mr. Balfour employs it to denote the application of the method of Naturalism to the decision of every controversy, the discussion of every creed. "Did a belief square with a view of the universe based exclusively upon the prevalent mode of interpreting sense-perception? If so, it might survive. Did it clash with such mode, or lie beyond it? It was superstitious; it was unscientific; it was ridiculous; it was incredible." Let these methods be ruthlessly applied to the whole circuit of belief, and we are brought to what may be described as thoroughgoing Rationalism in method and thoroughgoing Naturalism as a sufficient creed. Mr. Balfour holds that in this controversy no half-measures are possible. Once admit rationalising methods, and full-blown Naturalism is the logical result. Rationalistic orthodoxy is impotent and ineffective. Try to establish the fundamental truths of Theism upon a rationalistic

basis, or to prove the truth of the Christian religion upon premises which a naturalistic philosopher would accept, and you are doomed to failure. The so-called "historical proof" of Christianity Mr. Balfour holds to be quite inadequate for the purpose. If it could be shown that "there is good historic evidence of the usual sort for believing that for one brief interval during the history of the universe, and in one small corner of this planet, the continuous chain of universal causation has been broken; that in an insignificant country, inhabited by an unimportant branch of the Semitic people, events are alleged to have taken place, which, if they really occurred, at once turn into foolishness the whole theory in the light of which he [the naturalistic philosopher] has been accustomed to interpret human experience," the legitimate reply would be that it is more likely there have been mistakes somewhere in the traditions than that the philosopher's whole theory of the universe is mistaken. Such a one might fairly urge that "no explanation could be less satisfactory than the one which requires us, on the strength of three or four ancient documents —at the best written by eye-witnesses of little education and no scientific knowledge, at the worst spurious and of no authority—to remodel and revolutionise every principle which governs us with an unquestioned jurisdiction in our judgments on the universe at large."

Thus far we can travel with Mr. Balfour without difficulty. We could wish, indeed, that he had made it quite plain that the historical proof of Christianity above referred to is only to be viewed as inadequate when standing alone, not as being itself without value and importance. In its place, it is of the utmost

importance; but it forms only a part of a complex system of defence needed against a complex and many-sided assault. This, however, by the way. We agree with Mr. Balfour that it is necessary to go beyond the admitted premises of Naturalism and Rationalism in order to find a satisfactory basis for religion and theology; and we hold that he has proved the necessity of going beyond those premises to form an adequate and consistent theory of the world itself, to say nothing of any theory concerning a Maker of the world. But here we pause. We are by no means satisfied with the treatment accorded to the system of "Transcendental Idealism," associated in this country with the name of the late Professor T. H. Green. To it Mr. Balfour does scant justice, though we do not deny the force of some of his objections and criticisms. It would take us, however, too far afield to discuss this topic, and we pass on to express our disappointment at the course Mr. Balfour takes in his next section. This is entitled "Some Causes of Belief," an awkward description of influences which are distinct from "reasons," but which are alleged to be necessary in order to provide "the apparatus of beliefs which we find actually connected with the higher social and spiritual life of the race." The name which best describes this group of influences is said to be Authority, a principle described as definitely opposed to Reason, and through two or three chapters Mr. Balfour sets himself to disparage Reason, the functions of which in the formation of beliefs he considers to have been unduly magnified. He compares it to the boy who in the early days of steam-engines was set to work the valve by which steam was admitted to the cylinder, by the simple process of

pulling a string. The boy in question was of quite subordinate importance in the whole process, and the work is now better done by machinery. But Mr. Balfour has little doubt that the boy in question magnified his office and regarded himself as the most important link in the chain of causes and effects at work, and he is quite sure that the office of reason in the formation of beliefs has been similarly exaggerated. Its "slender contribution" is of some value, and, "pending the evolution of some better device," may be taken into the account; but Mr. Balfour seems to desire and to anticipate the time when Reason shall have as little to do in the formation of convictions as consciousness and will have in the process of digestion.

Now of two things, one. Either this part of Mr. Balfour's book means what it appears to mean, and in that case he must submit to be classed as the universal sceptic he has been accused of being: or he has made a very awkward use of the word "Reason," and laid himself justly open to the charge of appearing to undermine reason by the use of reason. We confess to being not quite sure, after repeated perusals, which is the true explanation, but we incline to the latter. In that case, by Reason, Mr. Balfour must be understood to mean reasoning, or rather one particular kind of reasoning to be defined as "ratiocination within the limits recognised by science." We are the more inclined to this view because Mr. Benjamin Kidd, in his *Social Evolution*, has fallen into a similar ambiguity and employs Reason in a narrow sense, according to which all our social and religious instincts are non-rational. Even so, Mr. Balfour's description of "authority" and his perpetual opposition of reason to authority, is very unfortunate.

It is to authority, not to reason, he says, that we owe not religion only, but ethics and politics: authority supplies the essential elements in the premises of science: authority rather than reason lays the foundations of social life, and authority rather than reason cements its superstructure. There is a sense in which all this is very true, and the rationalist needs to be reminded how much there is in human life which is not taken account of in his philosophy. But it is for the thinker who, like Mr. Balfour, professes to probe to the very bottom the foundations of belief, to explain the genesis and appraise the value of authority. The superficial observer may, for certain practical purposes, oppose it to reason; but the two are not necessarily opposed. Authority is largely the product of reason in the narrower sense, *i.e.* reasoning; and, when valid, it is always closely allied with Reason in the higher and wider sense of the word. But Mr. Balfour bluntly, and for such an acute thinker very crudely, sets it up as a non-rational "cause" of belief, which from the nature of things cannot be a reason for belief, and then, without analysing authority or determining the measure of its validity, or finding it in operation as a "cause" of belief, calmly proceeds to build upon it as an actual and, therefore, legitimate foundation. It is the scepticism of J. H. Newman—for the Cardinal was a sceptic concerning Reason, or he would never have been driven into the arms of Rome—which speaks in the following sentence, the last in this part of the discussion: "Though it may seem to savour of paradox, it is yet no exaggeration to say, that if we would find the quality in which we most notably excel the brute creation, we should look for it, not so much in our faculty of con-

vincing and being convinced by the exercise of reasoning, as in our capacity for influencing and being influenced through the action of Authority."

In this portion of his work Mr. Balfour has missed the main line of the argument. Naturalism is insufficient; the author adds, Idealism also, but in that we do not follow him. What is the conclusion? Give up reason and fall back upon purblind authority? Surely not. If the kind of reasoning which alone is admissible in science, while valid within its own limits, is inadequate to furnish us with an analysis of what we believe and an explanation of the grounds on which we believe—unable, that is, to supply an ultimate theory of the universal and ultimate foundations for beliefs which are necessary for existence and action, the nature of its limitations should be clearly shown, and a *rational* groundwork provided for such beliefs as may be shown to be rational, though not demonstrable by this particular mode of ratiocination. Authority is not necessarily irrational or non-rational or extra-rational. A large portion of its teaching is but the sum of the conclusions of reason, arrived at in the course of generations, stored up in the experience of the human race and available for the individual, if he is wise enough to use them. Professor V. H. Stanton, in his very instructive book on *The Place of Authority in Religious Belief*, defines Authority as "that principle which is exhibited in all reasons for receiving or assenting to a truth, if such there be, which are external to the man himself, to his own observation, reasoning, or intuition, or which, if revealed internally, lie beyond the reach of his own verification." But Mr. Balfour in his treatment of Authority gives us little help towards understanding

the relation between it and Reason, and he ceases here to be the excellent guide he has proved himself whilst criticising Naturalism.

To illustrate this, let us contrast with Mr. Balfour's procedure the line taken by Mr. Romanes when he began to find scientific methods inadequate for the construction of a theory of the universe. In his "Physicus" period, Romanes laid it down *sans phrase*, "There can no longer be any more doubt that the existence of God is wholly unnecessary to explain any of the phenomena of the universe, than there is doubt that if I let go my pen it will fall upon the table." Arguing according to the methods of Naturalism, he found the hypothesis of mind in nature to be "as certainly superfluous as the very basis of all science is certainly true." Where then, in later days, did he consider his error to lie? "I now clearly perceive two well-nigh fatal oversights which I then committed. The first was undue confidence in merely syllogistic conclusions, even when derived from sound premises, in regions of such high abstraction. The second was in not being sufficiently careful in examining the foundations of my criticism, *i.e.* the validity of its premises." The first error was due to unintentional arrogance, says Mr. Romanes of himself, through his not considering "how opposed to reason itself is the unexpressed assumption of my earlier argument as to God Himself, as if His existence were a mere physical problem to be solved by man's reason alone without reference to His other and higher faculties." The second mistake lay in so applying natural causation by means of the Law of Parsimony as to shut out the need of higher causes, afterwards seen to be "necessary to account for spiritual

facts." Elsewhere in the volume, some of the chief changes in Mr. Romanes' point of view are described by Mr. Gore as being these: that he came to attach much more importance to the subjective religious needs and intuitions of the human spirit; that he perceived that the subjective religious consciousness can be regarded objectively as a broad human phenomenon; that he criticised his earlier theory of causation and returned towards the theory that all causation is volitional; that he returned to the use of the expression, "the argument from design," and therefore presumably abandoned his objection to it, together with some other changes closely related to these.

Now we are not describing the change which took place in Mr. Romanes' mind as a perfect exhibition of the weakness of Naturalism and the way in which it ought to be remedied. But it does appear to us to furnish in many respects a more satisfactory mode of moving *towards* the construction of a positive creed than is provided by Mr. Balfour. We emphasise the word "towards" as Canon Gore does once or twice, because Romanes moved cautiously, and to the last was rather feeling after Christian faith than in full enjoyment of it. One very valuable contribution to the discussion at this stage is furnished by Mr. Romanes when he distinguishes between "pure" and "impure" Agnosticism, and ascribes his earlier errors to the fact that his Agnosticism was not "pure" enough, *i.e.* did not sufficiently confine itself within its own limits, but dogmatised concerning that which lay beyond them. The following paragraph exhibits a close coincidence with some parts of Mr. Balfour's arguments, and is in itself very suggestive:—

"There are two opposite casts of mind—the mechanical, scientific, etc., and the spiritual, artistic, religious, etc. These may alternate in the same individual. An 'Agnostic' has no hesitation—even though he himself keenly experience the latter—that the former only is worthy of trust. But a *pure* Agnostic must know better, as he will perceive that there is nothing to choose between the two in point of trustworthiness. Indeed, if choice has to be made, the mystic might claim higher authority for his direct intuitions."

Just here lies the *crux* of the whole matter, and we are inclined to think that any seeker after truth will find Mr. Romanes much the more satisfactory guide at this point. We greatly regret that we cannot exhibit even in outline the steps by which he slowly and with much hesitation, but very surely, moved Christwards. But the following paragraph deserves special notice:—

"When I wrote the preceding treatise (the *Candid Examination*) I did not sufficiently appreciate the immense importance of *human* nature as distinguished from physical nature, in any inquiry touching Theism. But since then I have seriously studied anthropology, including the science of comparative religions, psychology, and metaphysics, with the result of clearly seeing that human nature is the most important part of nature as a whole whereby to investigate the theory of Theism. This I ought to have anticipated on merely *à priori* grounds, and no doubt should have perceived, had I not been too much immersed in merely physical research."

This is surely a more satisfactory way of showing the deficiencies and errors of Naturalism than to minify and disparage reason, exalting authority as a non-rational "cause" of belief which must be reckoned with, and creating a schism in man's nature between parts of it which ought never to be opposed to one another. The processes of the logical understanding which are accepted as valid in "science" form only a part of the working of

man's Reason, understood in the highest and most complete sense of the word. The Agnostic is not wrong in saying that Theism cannot be demonstrated by the methods accepted in physical science; he is not wrong in refusing to accept Theism till it can be shown to be a reasonable belief; he is wrong, and shows himself to be not a "pure" Agnostic, in identifying scientific ratiocination with Reason. The Naturalist does this, and shuts out all beliefs not scientifically demonstrable as futile and vain. Mr. Balfour exposes the baseless dogmatism of such a course, but does not provide an adequate groundwork for theological belief in that Reason which is beyond scientific reasoning. Mr. Romanes shows how the limitation of Reason by the rationalist is itself irrational, and indicates some of the ways in which the deficiencies of "Physicus"—who is a perfect embodiment of Mr. Balfour's Naturalism—may be remedied.

It is true that Mr. Balfour, in the latter chapters of his book, does make some very considerable and valuable suggestions towards such a unification of beliefs as we have been indicating. He sees quite well that such unification must be aimed at. Man is so constituted that he cannot be satisfied to set up side by side with a scientific creed, duly accredited and verified, another set of beliefs not duly accredited by reason, intended to supplement the deficiencies of science or satisfy the aspirations which science can neither explain nor meet. Man will not long be content that two regions of knowledge should lie side by side, "contiguous but not connected, like empires of different race and language, which own no common jurisdiction nor hold any intercourse with each other, except along a disputed

and wavering frontier where no superior power exists to settle their quarrels or determine their respective limits." Whether such unification of beliefs in the departments of science, philosophy, and religion be at present possible, is another matter. Mr. Balfour frequently insists that it is not. He holds "that we should not be able completely to harmonise the detached hints and isolated fragments in which alone reality comes into relation with us: that we should but imperfectly co-ordinate what we so imperfectly comprehend, is what we might expect and what for the present we have no choice but to submit to." We agree with this statement in the main, and the Theist may be able to find a moral and religious discipline in this state of enforced partial ignorance, which an Agnostic must simply submit to as a necessity, so long as it lasts. But we think Mr. Balfour's tone upon this point is somewhat too sceptical, and a more resolute facing of the difficulty would have removed at least a portion of it. Religious presuppositions and a scientific interpretation of facts are not opposed or inconsistent; a higher philosophy than Naturalism has dreamed of will be able to place them in due mutual relation. The work has not yet been done, and Mr. Balfour is not the man to do it. Mr. Romanes might have done something towards it, had his life been spared, on lines which his friend Mr. Aubrey Moore—another Oxford scholar whose career was cut short at its prime—had previously indicated. But, as Professor Drummond said a while ago concerning Evolution, that it had been "given to the world out of focus," and remained out of focus ever since, it is unquestionably true that the view of the universe presented by science, if it be taken as the whole truth, gives a picture

which is not so much false, as distinctly out of focus, and therefore misleading. The "logic-chopping faculty," as Carlyle contemptuously called the understanding, is not to be despised, but its categories will only hold truths which are clipped and docked to fit its measure. So with the much-vaunted "methods of science." Admirable in their place, they fall lamentably short when they are set to do work for which they were never intended. What is wanted, therefore, is a philosophy which will find a place in the whole system of beliefs for the invaluable work done by science, but which will resolutely and rationally keep it in its place. Mr. Balfour's contribution to this philosophy hardly reaches beyond the important conclusion which he has afresh established and illustrated, that even in the accomplishment of this work science is not self-sufficing, but needs presuppositions which she did not furnish, which she cannot prove, yet without which her whole fabric would fall to the ground.

In one place Mr. Balfour says: "Theism is . . . . a principle which science, for a double reason, requires for its own completion. The ordered system of phenomena asks for a cause; our knowledge of that system is inexplicable, unless we assume for it a rational author." And again: "If I confined myself to saying that the belief in a God, who is not merely 'substance' or 'subject,' but is, in biblical language, 'a living God,' affords no ground of quarrel between theology and science, I should much understate my thought. I hold, on the contrary, that some such presupposition is not only tolerated, but is actually required by science." Precisely; and if required, it must be upon premises which can be shown to be in the highest degree rational,

though, from the nature of the case, they cannot be proved by scientific reasoning. And, though these cannot be proved, they can be verified. Mr. Balfour's own treatment of ethics and other sciences amounts to a *reductio ad absurdum* of Naturalism, as an alternative to Theism. Similar negative methods of disproof might be applied, *e.g.* to Pantheism and Materialism. Theism, though not without its difficulties, holds its ground as a well-tested and satisfactory working hypothesis, where others egregiously fail. Surely it is not to be said that this mode of argument is non-rational or extra-rational, because it fails to provide the final grip of demonstrative force which may be gained in pure mathematics, or in any of the exact sciences? No philosophy is worthy the name which cannot provide for the well-known fact that neither exhaustive logical analysis nor complete scientific ratiocination is a normal test of the validity of our primitive beliefs. There must be bed-rock somewhere beneath the surface, if a secure foundation is to be found for the elaborate structure of human beliefs; and, for reasons which a religious man has not to go far to seek, the bed-rock is furnished for us, lying deep down below the strata of logical analysis and inductive research, beyond the power of reason to prove, but not beyond its power to approve, rest upon, and start from, in its task of building a stable and sufficient superstructure of working belief.

Scientific men are coming to acknowledge what theologians have always—though not always very wisely, or with due care—asserted on this head. Mr. Romanes was nothing if not scientific. In his *Candid Examination of Religion*, he says: "We have seen . . . that all first principles even of scientific facts are known by

intuition, and not by reason. The context shows that 'reason' is used in the sense of 'scientific reasoning.' No one can deny this. Now, if there be a God, the fact is certainly of the nature of a first principle; for it must be the first of all first principles. No one can dispute this. No one, therefore, can dispute the necessary conclusion that, if there be a God, he is knowable (if knowable at all) by intuition and not by reason. Indeed, a little thought is enough to show that from its very nature as such, reason must be incapable of adjudicating on the subject, for it is a process of inferring from the known to the unknown." It will be observed that the language of this extract is very cautious; "if there be a God," he is knowable, "if knowable at all," by intuition, not by reasoning. But such caution is a mark of the scientific mind. All that science can do is to clear the way of certain *à priori* sceptical objections to Theism. It is all that religion asks or needs. Mr. Romanes shows us the way in which a science which knows its own limits, instead of dogmatising in regions beyond them, as Naturalism does, will prepare the way for religion to work. And it is a matter of unfeigned rejoicing to see that the postulates which the religious man holds by faith are now being vindicated as not only rationally tenable, but as absolutely required to furnish a firm basis for true science, and to contribute a necessary element in every philosophy which claims to be adequate and abiding.

This is true, perhaps it may be said, of Theism, but what of Christianity? A writer like Dr. Martineau may lay broad and firm the foundations of Theism, showing how it is bound up with the very constitution of the human mind, implied in the necessary laws of

human thought and the conclusions of the ripest science and philosophy. But it may be urged that it is otherwise with Christian doctrines such as the Incarnation, which Martineau rejects, and which cannot be defended by similar lines of argument. The portion of Mr. Balfour's book which deals with this subject is confessedly slight and inadequate. Not that the remarks made are unimportant; they are both acute and suggestive. But they are, so to speak, by the way. A book of "Notes" does not profess to be systematic, and Mr. Balfour does not pose as an apologist. But if he had written as a philosopher who had passed beyond the stage of "philosophic doubt," even his "notes" would have indicated a carefully ordered line of defence upon which the reader could fall back in case of need. As it is, both Mr. Balfour and Mr. Romanes write too much in the spirit and under the influence of Pascal. The *Pensées* are as valuable as fragments can well be, but they remain fragments still. Nevertheless, let us not be ungrateful for fragments which provide more sufficient nourishment than the whole meal furnished forth by some philosophers.

Mr. Balfour's suggestions concerning the evidences of Christianity are partly direct, partly indirect. He thinks little, as we have seen, of historical evidences, when adduced upon a rationalistic basis; and very wisely, as it seems to us, insists that the important question at present is, "In what temper of mind, in what mood of expectation, ought our provisional philosophy to induce us to consider the extant historic evidence for the Christian story?" He replies that the answer must depend upon "the view we take of the ethical import of Christianity, while its ethical

import, again, must depend on the degree to which it ministers to our ethical needs." The last statement is in some danger of being misunderstood. To argue that because man appears to have certain moral needs or to have constructed certain moral ideals, therefore, a religion which seems to meet these needs, or satisfy these ideals, must be true, is a very precarious mode of reasoning. Mr. Balfour is not shallow enough to argue thus. In the caution with which he frames his argument at this stage, as at some other points, his likeness to Bishop Butler appears. "I confine myself to asking whether, in a universe which by hypothesis is under moral governance, there is not a presumption in favour of facts or events which minister, if true, to our highest moral demands? and whether such a presumption, if it exists, is not sufficient, and more than sufficient, to neutralise the counter-presumption, which has uncritically governed so much of the criticism directed in recent times against the historic claims of Christianity?" The arguments suggested, rather than worked out, under this head may be summarised as follows:—(1) Christianity is the only living and vigorous form of Theism at the present day, and it furnishes elements which our advanced knowledge and culture make more necessary to us than ever. It is entitled, therefore, to all the support which Theism claims as that form or development of theistic doctrine which best commends itself to the intelligence of modern times. (2) For example, the change produced in our views by astronomical discoveries and the sense of the magnitude of the universe and the subordinate place occupied in it by man, viewed merely as an intelligent animal, create in man as a moral being a new need for Christianity, to redress

the balance. It is true that "speculation by itself should be sufficient to convince us that, in the sight of a righteous God, material grandeur and moral excellence are incommensurable quantities; and that an infinite accumulation of the one cannot compensate for the smallest diminution of the other." God does not estimate value by physical size, but man's imagination is so impressed by the physical grandeur of the universe that no abstract argument will move him as he will be moved by the teaching of the Incarnation. Nothing will span, like it, "the immeasurable gulf which separates Infinite Spirit from creatures who seem little more than physiological accidents." (3) Again, the difficulties which arise from the coexistence of omnipotence in God and the presence of evil in the world may be met by some forms of metaphysical speculation, but these are too slight and frail to bear the weight of man's sorrows and doubts. Christianity comes in to relieve woes which philosophy is impotent even to palliate. "What is needed is such a living faith in God's relation to man as shall leave no place for that helpless resentment against the appointed Order, so apt to rise within us at the sight of undeserved pain." This is realised in Christianity, since it reveals a God who, so far from being indifferent to these sufferings, took upon Himself the very conditions which awaken our anguish and resentment, in order to show man how he may be delivered from them for ever. Beliefs like these, Mr. Balfour says, do not resolve our doubts or furnish complete explanations of the great problems of life. They do better; "they minister, or rather the Reality behind them ministers, to one of our deepest ethical needs; to a need which, far from showing signs of

diminution, seems to grow with the growth of civilisation, and to teach us ever more keenly as the hardness of an earlier time dissolves away."

All this is as finely as truly said. The paragraphs from which we have quoted contain thoughts for which all Christian readers will feel grateful to the author; more grateful, probably, than to any professed apologist with his elaborately constructed scheme of evidences. None the less it is obvious that such arguments as these stand in what we may call the second, not the first line of defence; and, valuable as they are in their place, they are not weighty enough to bear the first brunt of hostile attack. It may be regretted, therefore, that Mr. Balfour did not supply some needed links of argument which might have been succinctly stated in a very few pages, and which would have furnished to the considerations he has adduced their needed setting. For instance, the first thing that needs to be said when the fallacies of Naturalism have been removed out of the way, and room is made for constructive Theism, is that more consideration must be given than Naturalism has consented to give to human nature in its most highly developed forms, as distinguished from physical nature; to man as a moral and spiritual being, as distinguished from man as an intelligent animal, the highest known form of *Bimana* amongst the *Mammalia*. This may be shown to be a rational, the only rational mode of procedure. Mr. Romanes came to perceive it, and acknowledged, in a passage we quoted above, that he would have seen it, had his attention not been unduly concentrated upon purely physical considerations. In another passage he furnishes a striking commentary upon Mr. Balfour's sentences concerning ethical needs:—

"The negative evidence is furnished by the nature of man without God. It is thoroughly miserable, as is well shown by Pascal. . . . . Some men are not conscious of the cause of this misery; this, however, does not prevent the fact of their being miserable. . . . . I know from experience the intellectual distractions of scientific research, philosophical speculation, and artistic pleasures; but am also well aware that even when all are taken together and well sweetened to taste, in respect of consequent reputation, means, social position, etc., the whole concoction is but as high confectionery to a starving man. He may cheat himself for a time—especially if he be a strong man—into the belief that he is nourishing himself by denying his natural appetite; but soon finds that he was made for some altogether different kind of food, even though of much less tastefulness, so far as the palate is concerned."

This may read more like an extract from a sermon than from a scientific treatise. But Mr. Romanes is not preaching. He is arguing that a "pure Agnostic," while he must avoid the "high *priori* road," must carefully recognise all *à posteriori* evidences, and that amongst these should be included the subjective religious needs and intuitions of the human spirit and the religious consciousness regarded objectively as a human phenomenon. Surely this is reasonable, however little admitted by Naturalism; and, placed in such a setting as this supplies, Mr. Balfour's subsidiary arguments would have gained in cogency and appropriateness.

As a matter of fact, neither Mr. Balfour nor Mr. Romanes enters closely enough into the subject fairly to answer the question of the former, "In what temper of mind, in what mood of expectation, ought we to consider the extant evidence for the Christian story?" Not certainly in a temper of mind, a "psychological climate," determined solely by a long course of purely physical research. But, also, not in a mood determined

entirely by philosophical contemplation of man's needs aud aspirations. The terrible fact of Sin is one which scientists and philosophers are alike apt to ignore. Nevertheless it is a fact, not a theological dogma. A Theist—we are assuming for the moment that the line of argument adopted has proved Theism to be the most reasonable working hypothesis — cannot be satisfied with the general phrase, "moral evil," to describe the state of man. Man viewed as a spiritual being under the government of a spiritual God is a sinner. Till the meaning of that statement is understood, till it is seen to be not some theological thesis taken from the Bible, but the only adequate description of the fundamental mischief at work in human nature, it is impossible to reach the fit "temper of mind" and "mood of expectation" in which to approach the evidence for such a story as that which constitutes the core of the Christian religion. We find no fault with Mr. Balfour for not entering into these matters. The introduction of them would not have helped the object he had in view. But, in order to show the intrinsic reasonableness of Christianity, more is necessary than to show the inadequacy of Naturalism, more than an exposition of the necessity of Theism for an intelligent view of the universe, more than to claim for man his due place in the universe, more than to unfold his ethical aspirations and the way in which the Christian religion meets them. A man will not be brought to believe the stupendous statement that God was manifest in the flesh, still less that He suffered in human form to atone for sin, without a much deeper sense of the imperative need for such intervention than the arguments above suggested would imply. And at every turn to-day it

is being shown that there is no greater obstacle in the way of the Christian religion than the superficial and inadequate sense of sin which makes the story of a divine Saviour to appear far-fetched and incredible.

But we are travelling beyond our brief. We began by saying that the preparation for a measure of theological reconstruction is going on in our midst. We have illustrated the statement by showing how two writers who are alike animated by the *Zeitgeist* and alike innocent of theological prepossessions or bias, have been laying afresh the "foundations of belief," and preparing the way for the "foundations of faith." It will be said that there is no reconstruction here, only a rediscovery of truths as old as human nature, or at least as old as Christianity. In a sense this is true. But a generation steeped in the methods of physical science, till it hardly has eyes for anything else, needs to pass through a process which necessitates the laying afresh of old foundations. And the process which implies a rediscovery of forgotten truths on the part of Naturalism may be and should be salutary for the theologian, who himself has new truth to assimilate. In days when theories of evolution have revolutionised man's view of the universe, the old Theism needs restatement, and the old theology, as, purified and strengthened, it passes into the new, is so altered that some of its friends can hardly recognise it as the same. Moreover, if our account of these two able and fascinating volumes is correct, they both fall conspicuously short in their more purely constructive portions. They point in a direction in which they do not travel. In this respect also they illustrate the thesis with which we began—that theological construction on a broad, firm

basis, which shall include, but resolutely keep in their place, all scientific discoveries, all scientific methods and mental habitudes, is the need, and we believe will be the work, of the near future. Theology must put off her academic robes, and renew her perennial task of working away at the deepest facts of human life and the deepest questions of the human mind, in the fullest light which the generation can furnish, and with the fullest comprehension possible of the revealed will of God. We hail with the greatest satisfaction the prospect that in this work theologians are likely to be aided by some of the most highly trained minds of the day, approaching the same problems from a different side, but reaching substantially the same point, and engaged in promoting the same great end. If the omens furnished by these two volumes are to be trusted, the opening of the twentieth century in this country will be marked by such a revitalising of Christian faith as shall send it forth to achieve new conquests, broader, more robust, more indomitable, because more secure in its foundations and more comprehensive in its scope, than at any previous period of Christian history.

VI.

CHRISTIANITY AND GREEK THOUGHT.

IT is characteristic of our time, in the consideration of religious, as of all other questions, to vaunt the sufficiency of the "historic method," which is understood to be equivalent to the "scientific method" of investigation. It is too often assumed that to trace out the history of a doctrine, an institution, or a form of thought is to explain it, and that to furnish an outline of its growth and development is to account for its existence, and set it in its right place in the general order of things. The historical method is understood to be a potent *organon*, whereby many old problems are at last to be satisfactorily solved. Now, we have not a word to say against the historical method in itself. We have no objection to admit that until very lately the value of this method in theology has by no means been fully recognised. Its significance has been underestimated, and in practice it has been almost entirely postponed to the dogmatic method. Now, however, there appears to be some danger of a reaction to the other extreme. The application of historical analysis in matters theological requires especial care. Not only is it necessary for the historical theologian to see to it that he takes into consideration—first, pure facts,

unalloyed by personal or sectional bias; secondly, *all* the facts that are accessible; but, thirdly, he must be sure that his deductions are drawn with the utmost care and freedom from prepossession. For the historical method needs the historical temper, and that is rare indeed, especially among theologians. Further, if bias and prepossession be altogether laid on one side, it must not be forgotten that for the historian of religion essential materials are often lacking. When, therefore, any great problem of religious history is to be attacked by the historical method, while the investigation is one of the highest interest, and may be of the highest value, it is especially necessary for the student to be on his guard.

These remarks find ample illustration in the two chief works of that eminent and able theologian, the late Dr. Hatch. His Bampton Lectures on *The Organisation of the Early Christian Churches*, and his Hibbert Lectures on *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Churches*, are examples of the historical method in theology, exhibited alike in its strength and in its weakness. The writer's object in the former volume, he tells us, was "faithfully to collect, sift, and compare the available evidence, and draw the conclusions to which that evidence seems to point, without reference to other hypotheses, however venerable from their antiquity, or however widely diffused in the Christian world." The general conclusions arrived at, as regards Church organisation, were that the framework of Christian society was not a directly ordained Divine institution, but was slowly developed out of elements existing in heathen society, the Christian ministry being formed upon the model

of social and philanthropic organisations already at work in the Roman empire. According to Dr. Hatch, the Christian society was first a democracy; afterwards, under the pressure of existing needs, it became a monarchy, from which the conclusion naturally follows that it might become a democracy again. He questions whether what was primitive was intended to be permanent, and urges that what it is important for the Christian Church to preserve is, "not the ancient form so much as the historical continuity."

In the later volume Dr. Hatch deals, not with organisation, but with doctrine. The book is one which should be handled tenderly, for the author did not live to watch it through the press himself, and it sees the light only through the able and pious care of Dr. Fairbairn, of Mansfield College, who, in company with one or two zealous coadjutors, has deciphered fragmentary sheets of loose notes and MSS. anything but ready for the press. Through this kindly editing, however, Dr. Hatch's Lectures are presented in such a way as to do no injustice to his views, and eight lectures out of the twelve were left by him prepared for the printer's hands. The work thus published is, as Dr. Fairbairn says in the Preface, an admirable illustration of Dr. Hatch's method, but, "in order to be judged aright, it ought to be judged within the limits he himself has drawn. It is a study in historical development, an analysis of some of the formal factors that conditioned a given process, and determined a given result. . . . His purpose, like his method, was scientific, and as an attempt at the scientific treatment of the growth and formulation of the ideas, of the evo-

lution and establishment of usages within the Christian Church, it ought to be studied and criticised." As such, we proceed to examine this most suggestive volume. If the historical or scientific method is very potent, and its application needs to be carefully watched and guarded where ecclesiastical organisation is concerned, much more is this the case where doctrine and the very fabric of Christian truth is affected. The thesis of Dr. Hatch concerning the influence of Greek thought and usages upon the development of Christianity is so interesting, and at the same time the rash acceptance or unwise application of it would be so dangerous, that it is needful first of all to describe it, and then to criticise it in some of its positions and bearings.

Dr. Hatch begins by drawing a sharp contrast between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed. The former is the promulgation of a new law of conduct; the latter is a statement made up of metaphysical terms, which would probably have been unintelligible to the first disciples, and one in which ethics have no place. "The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants; the other to a world of Greek philosophers." How did this revolution come about? Why did an ethical sermon stand in the forefront of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and a metaphysical creed in the forefront of the Christianity of the fourth century? The exact question propounded is "not how did the Christian societies come to believe one [doctrinal] proposition rather than another, but how did they come to the frame of mind which attached importance to either the one or the other, and made the assent to the one rather than the other a condition of membership." This change

in the centre of gravity of the Christian religion from conduct to belief is, says Dr. Hatch, seen to be coincident with the transference of Christianity from a Semitic to a Greek soil. "The presumption is, that it was the result of Greek influence." The Lectures that follow, therefore, are occupied with the subject of "The Influence of Greece upon Christianity," with a view to show that that influence may be generally described by the transition effected from the Sermon on the Mount to the Creed of Nicæa.

A study of the growth and modifications of the early forms of Christianity, and of the effect upon them of Greek ideas and usages, must be many-sided. Dr. Hatch accordingly begins with the subject of education, and shows, with no little learning, and in a most interesting style, how complex and varied, how widely diffused and lasting in its effects, Greek education was. The life which was formed by it was also complex and artificial, and it gave to Christianity something of its own form. A chapter "On Greek and Christian Exegesis" seeks to trace out its influence in its bearing upon Scripture interpretation, especially in the use of the allegorical method, which Dr. Hatch thinks is harmless so long as it is regarded as "the play of innocent imagination on the surface of great truths," but when it became traditional and authoritative, "it became at once the slave of dogmatism and the tyrant of souls." An interesting study of Greek rhetoric, the bearing of which upon the subject is not at first sight very close, leads to the conclusion that Rhetoric killed Philosophy in the history of Greek thought, and that Christian preachers, under the same influence, destroyed religion by overlaying it with sophistry. Instead of

the prophet came the eloquent talker; but the victory gained by the supple Greek intellect was dearly won. "It purchased conquest at the price of reality," and Christianity has had an element of sophistry in it ever since. Similarly, in the fifth lecture, the author endeavours to show that Greek philosophy has adulterated the purity of early Christian religion. The Greek tendency to attach the same certainty to metaphysical as to physical ideas has been most mischievous. Dogmas are simply personal convictions, and "the belief that metaphysical theology is more than this is the chief bequest of Greece to religious thought, and it has been a *damnosa hæreditas*. It has given to later Christianity that part of it which is doomed to perish, and which yet, while it lives, holds the key of the prison-house of many souls."

The chapter on Greek and Christian ethics labours to prove that the age in which Christianity grew was in reality an age of moral reformation, the Stoics and the Cynics, as represented by such a teacher as Epictetus, seeking to give supremacy to ethics over logic, and raising the contents of ethical teaching from the sphere of moral philosophy to that of religion. The effect of Greek influence upon Christianity in the region of ethics was not, however, favourable, for in part it resulted in this, that "the attention of a majority of Christian men was turned to the intellectual as distinguished from the moral element in the life," and, so far as directly ethical influence was felt, the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount became changed into the ethics of Roman Law, so that "the basis of Christian society is not Christian, but Roman and Stoical."

To theology Dr. Hatch devotes more space. We cannot, however, follow him in detail, as he seeks to show the effect of Greek thought upon the primitive idea of Christianity concerning God, dwelling especially upon the three elements in that idea—of God as Creator, as Moral Governor, and as Absolute Being. If Greek thought helped Christians to find a reasoned basis for Hebrew monotheism, it also caused them to lay emphasis on the conception of God as the Artificer and Architect of the universe, rather than as its immanent Cause. The Arian controversy, with its endless discussions concerning Homo-ousios and Homoio-ousios, and the vain attempts of the Church to pour the contents of the four Greek terms, *οὐσία*, *ὑπόστασις*, *πρόσωπον*, and *φύσις*, into the Latin three, *substantia*, *persona*, and *natura*, could only, according to Dr. Hatch's views, be disastrous. "The simple and unstudied language of the childhood of Christianity, with its awestruck sense of the ineffable nature of God, was but a fading memory; and, on the other hand, the tendency to trust in and insist upon the results of speculation was strong. Once, indeed, the Catholic doctrine was formulated, then, though not till then, the majority began to deprecate investigations as to the nature of God." The assumptions—(1) that metaphysical distinctions are important; (2) that these distinctions which we make in our minds correspond to realities in the world around us; (3) that the idea of perfection which we transfer from ourselves to God really corresponds to the nature of His being—are assumptions only. Nevertheless, says Dr. Hatch, they lie at the basis of Greek speculation, and have entered accordingly into the very substance of the Christian

religion as we have received it. We may be destined, then, to transcend these by new assumptions, "which will lead us at once to a divine knowledge and the sense of a diviner life."

After dealing in the tenth lecture with the influence of the Greek mysteries upon Christian usages, especially of the two Sacraments of the Church,—a subject on which Dr. Hatch's remarks are least satisfactory, and his straining of the points he wishes to make is greatest, —the lecturer dwells in the last two lectures upon the incorporation of Christian ideas into a body of doctrine and the transformation of the basis of Christian union, placing doctrine in the room of conduct; two processes which he believes to have been carried on and carried out under the prevailing influence of Greek ideas. The idea of trust in God thus passed into the idea of a creed, "blending theory with fact, and metaphysical speculation with spiritual truth." The symmetry of the system became the test of its truth and the proof of all. And this "system" was but "the speculations of a majority at certain meetings." The mental tendencies of the majority at Nicæa were assumed to be not only true, but final; the Nicene theology was taken as part of the original revelation—a theology divinely communicated to the Apostles by Jesus Christ Himself. Last of all comes "enormous change in the Christian communities by which an assent to that body of doctrine became the basis of union." The teaching of the catechumens was no longer the inculcation of the higher morality; it was the *traditio symboli*, "the teaching of the password and of its meaning. The creed and teaching were the creed and teaching of the average members of the communities. In

religion, as in society, it is the average that rules. The law of life is compromise." The test of being a Christian was conformity to the resolutions of the Councils, and assent to orthodox opinions the sole basis of Christian union. There were reactions, no doubt, illustrated by periodical outbreaks of Puritanism and Monachism; still, the Church gradually became, not an assembly of devout men, but a society of men of the world, "basing their conduct on the current maxims of society, held together by the loose bond of a common name and of a creed which they did not understand." Such a society must have an intellectual basis as its only possible basis, and it must insist upon that as essential to self-preservation. Christianity since that time has won no more victories. The darkest pages in the history of the Church are "those which record the story of its endeavouring to force its transformed Greek metaphysics upon men or upon races to whom they were alien." The only ground for despair in those who accept Christianity now, is the fear that the dominance of the metaphysical element in it will be perpetual: the one ground of hope, to which Dr. Hatch evidently clung eagerly and tenaciously, is that the Christian religion in its purity and simplicity may cast off the cerements of Greek theories and usages, which are only Christian in name, in form and in colour, and, freed from metaphysical subtleties and the bands of dogmatic formularies, may renew its youth, put on its pristine vigour, and go forth to that conquest of the world which it was originally destined to achieve.

Most imperfectly have we sketched the outline of

this vigorous and able book. Dr. Hatch's proofs and illustrations we have not given at all, and the description of his positions has been necessarily brief and inadequate. Nevertheless, we hope we have not done injustice to his main argument by the above account of it, and we shall be able to make a few further detailed quotations which will enable the writer to speak in his own words. We proceed, therefore, to present some criticisms of Dr. Hatch's positions and arguments, the effect of which upon modern Christianity, were they accepted in full, would, it is clear, be nothing short of revolutionary. Is it true, we ask, that primitive Christianity is to be discerned in the Sermon on the Mount? Is it true that the transition from its ethical teaching to the Nicene Creed was chiefly effected by Greek ideas and habits of thought in the third and fourth centuries? Was Christianity itself revolutionised by Greek influences in the sense and to the degree which Dr. Hatch describes? How far does the Nicene Creed represent a corruption, how far a growth of development of primitive Christian religion? Is the "Greek element" in Christianity a deleterious excrescence which has injured the plant for centuries by its poisonous juices, and which must be worked out of its system as soon as may be? These are only a few out of many questions suggested by this volume of Hibbert Lectures, which will remain a monument to the learning and ability of their author, too soon removed from amongst us, whether they do or do not form a contribution of permanent value to the history of the Christian Church. The value of that contribution has yet to be determined after due examination held, and in such an examination we think it our duty

to take a part, though it must be slight and comparatively superficial.

First of all, it is, we think, tolerably clear that the application of the historical method, pure and simple, in theology, is particularly difficult to achieve. We should not like to say that Dr. Hatch was unconsciously affected throughout by bias and personal prepossessions; but it is certain that in the outline above sketched the historian cannot be said to have given all the facts, and nothing but the facts, and to have abstained from deductions except such as were warranted by the facts. He himself admits that "most of us bring to the study of Christian history a number of conclusions already formed. We tend to beg the question before we examine it." He means that we are prejudiced in favour of the Christianity we know, and that the happy associations and sacred memories which have encompassed us from childhood prevent us from analysing the Christianity we love into its component parts. But it needs only a short study of this book to show that there is another danger, which Dr. Hatch has certainly not altogether escaped—that of taking a partial and one-sided view of a complex growth and development, and of reading into the history conclusions which we cannot help thinking were unconsciously present in the writer's mind before his historical analysis was begun. Dr. Fairbairn says that the lectures deal throughout "solely with formal factors and the conditions under which they operated," that the lecturer "does not pronounce on the value or validity of the result." But that is precisely what the lecturer often does most explicitly, while throughout his work there is a continual implicit pronouncement

upon much more than the operation of "formal factors" in the growth of Christian doctrine. But let us try to make this good in detail.

To begin with, one chief charge we should make against Dr. Hatch is that in his historical study he—strangely enough—omits to begin with the New Testament. He did this also in his Bampton Lectures. There, however, there was the excuse—valid enough within certain limits—that the New Testament propounds no theory of Church Government. Even so, it was the duty of a writer upon the "early organisation" of Christian Churches at least briefly to examine into the teaching of the New Testament on his theme. But in the case of doctrine this excuse does not hold. Would Dr. Hatch say that there is no scheme of doctrine in the New Testament? No formulated scheme certainly can be found there, but the historian does not deal simply with formulated schemes. A body of doctrine is certainly contained in the New Testament, with which every writer who professes to trace the subsequent effect of Greek thought upon "primitive Christianity" is bound to deal. Would he say that there is doubt concerning the dates of some New Testament writings, and that he could not discuss the composition of the Gospels, or the authorship of the writings attributed to St. John? It still remains true that the dates of most of the books of the New Testament, whoever may have been their authors, are approximately fixed, and that no writer is competent to begin to trace out the influence of Greek ideas and usages upon Christianity till he has described what in germ that Christianity was, as embodied in the earliest Christian writings, the books revered as sacred and authoritative by the Christians of

the centuries which he undertakes more particularly to examine.

Dr. Hatch begins with the Sermon on the Mount as virtually embodying "primitive Christianity." This is his *terminus a quo*. But by what right does he thus choose a starting-point which itself begs a large part of the question he sets out to determine? On what principle can he isolate a portion of Christ's teaching—a discourse uttered when the Master had in view one particular class of considerations only, when He was dealing with the relation between the Old and the New Commandment, and viewing the subjects of the New Kingdom in relation to conduct—and deal with this fragment of our Lord's teaching apart from the rest of His words handed down to us, apart from the Gospel narratives as a whole, apart from the evidence of those books, of the New Testament at least, whose date and genuineness is practically undoubted? Even the Sermon on the Mount implies a theology, but if it did not, it can no more be separated from the rest of Christ's teaching, when we are trying to understand what "primitive Christianity" is, than, say, His parables, or His discourses concerning the last things. If we confine our attention to the Synoptic Gospels only, whence our knowledge of the Sermon on the Mount is derived, we must take into account all Christ's teaching concerning the judgment, and Himself as Judge, such passages as Matt. xi. 27, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, etc."; as well as His words concerning His own death as "a ransom for many"; and many others. True, there is no "systematic theology," certainly no "metaphysics," in these utterances; but there are certain great cardinal

facts recorded and certain cardinal truths laid down, which lead us into regions far beyond the simple and sublime ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount; facts and truths which make it possible to listen to the Sermon without the despair it would otherwise awaken in the human heart, as containing commandments too lofty for frail and sinful human nature ever to dream of being able to obey them.

But we are not confined to the Synoptic Gospels, and we are not ignorant of the critical difficulties which attend an acceptance of them in their present form as a primitive record. We are entitled to ask—it is the first thing which scores of intelligent readers have asked, on laying down Dr. Hatch's book—What does he make of St. Paul? He cannot profess to doubt the genuineness or early date of the four Epistles—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. Was Paul a Greek? He wrote in Greek, and knew something—probably not very much—of Greek literature; but "Jew" is stamped on every page of his writings, which are steeped in Semitic thought, characterised throughout by the Semitic temper. Yet who can read the first or the fifth or the eighth chapter of Romans without discovering—not indeed Greek metaphysics—but a statement of great religious verities which cannot be thoroughly understood in their various aspects and bearings without a great deal of metaphysics, Greek or other? If the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, or either of them, be admitted as Pauline, the case is greatly strengthened. Does this sentence come from Alexandria in the fourth century: "The Son of His Love. . . . Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in Him were all

things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." The Christ of Paul, if Paul's acknowledged writings are reduced to a minimum, is sufficient to prepare the way for the Christ of the Nicene Creed.

We do not press the testimony of the Johannine writings, though there were much to be said concerning them. If the Fourth Gospel were not written by St. John, though steadily accumulating evidence has now almost settled that question in the affirmative, all critics agree that it cannot be dated later than the middle of the second century. What is to be made of that fact in this "historical" sketch of the transition from the Sermon on the Mount and the Creed of Nicæa? The Gospel is not Greek in thought, though it is Greek in language. The single fact of the occurrence of the word *Logos* in this important Christian document, which certainly appeared within one hundred years of Christ's death, vitiates a great deal of Dr. Hatch's argument. If we be allowed to use the evidence of the Pastoral Epistles, as we certainly must, whether Paul wrote them or not, the repeated mention of "the pattern of sound words," "the good doctrine," "the sound doctrine committed unto thee," nullifies a great deal more. The mention in the Epistle of Jude of "the faith once delivered unto the saints" is only one passage among many others which shows how arbitrary and misleading is Dr. Hatch's isolation of the Sermon on the Mount as itself an adequate representation of "primitive Christianity."

But we ought almost to apologise to our readers for arguing this out; the point is so patent, that it will be felt at once as if we were wronging Dr. Hatch by representing him as taking no account of it. Indeed, we have been ourselves not a little puzzled to know how he would reply to this most natural objection, for it is hard to extract any satisfactory reply from his pages. There is one striking fact, however, which shows that we are doing no injustice to the Hibbert Lecturer in fastening him down to this very narrow and inadequate description of primitive Christianity. This is, the stress he repeatedly lays upon the *Didaché*, the lately discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." Again and again he draws attention to this document as apparently the most trustworthy record remaining to us of early Christianity. He considers (p. 160) that it expresses "the current ideal of Christian practice. In the 'way of life' which it sets forth, doctrine has no place." It is, in fact, an expansion, in parts, of the Sermon on the Mount. The document is no doubt exceedingly valuable to the students of early Church history, though there is as yet by no means a complete consensus of opinion among scholars either as to its date or its exact place and significance as a record of the early Church. But is it worthy of one who pursues the "historical method" to pass by the four Epistles of St. Paul, and insist again and again upon this anonymous document as representative of the beliefs of the primitive Church? There are passing phrases also in the book —such as one in which Ebionitism is spoken of as "old-fashioned Christianity"—which show that Dr. Hatch is fain to hint at what he certainly cannot prove, namely, that there was a period in the earliest history of the

Christian Church when Ebionitic doctrine prevailed and was counted orthodox, the Pauline and Johannine types of Christian teaching being but later developments. If historians form their own ideas of what the evolution of thought and opinion ought to be, they must not twist facts and documents into conformity with these conceptions. Not that we believe for a moment that Dr. Hatch was capable of anything like a passing insincerity; but his treatment of the earliest Christian documents is unaccountable, except as the result of unconscious bias in favour of a theory.

There was, then, we may be allowed to assume, much more of doctrinal teaching in the Christianity of the first century, while it was distinctly "Semitic" in character, than Dr. Hatch has at all admitted. The great central facts of Christianity, as recorded in the New Testament, and the cardinal truths there stated in non-metaphysical language, did undoubtedly afford a basis for subsequent metaphysical treatment, which Dr. Hatch has altogether omitted to notice. But it appears to us that he has greatly exaggerated the prevalence and influence of Greek metaphysics in the history of Christianity. The ethical element in the Christian life of the fourth century is minimised in this volume. It is quite true that during the Arian controversy, for example, undue attention was for a time attracted to theological subtleties, but no student of Athanasius can fail to perceive the dominant ethical element in many of his orations and writings, as well as the fact that to him the contest concerning the Person of Christ was as much a moral as a theological one, involving ethical and practical issues of the very first importance. There is a difference, no doubt, between the various

fathers as representatives of Christian thought and teaching. It would not be difficult, by confining attention to Clement and Origen, to show that in Alexandria Christianity was sometimes in danger of being overlaid and stifled by Greek philosophy. But a wider outlook would correct this. Especially must it be remembered that the records of ecclesiastical assemblies and doctrinal controversies which have come down to us by no means fully or fairly represent the working of the Christian religion at large in all its bearings. It was purifying the morals and sweetening and beautifying the life of tens of thousands of Christian homes, in the very days when Gregory of Nazianzus complained of the unseemly quarrels of ecclesiastical councils, and declared that he would attend "no more of these battles of cranes and geese." All this Dr. Hatch would, of course, at once admit; but our complaint is, that, as he has minimised the doctrinal element in earliest Christianity, so he has minimised the ethical element in the Christian life of the fourth century, and has thereby produced an unfair and misleading picture.

He has omitted, furthermore, to take full and proper account of the influence of Christianity upon Greek philosophy. If Christianity adopted words and phrases from the Greek literature of the time, it baptized, renewed, and elevated them. It had done this from the beginning. How misleading it would be to say that St. John degraded and adulterated the purity of Christian truth through his use of the word *logos*, and try to prove the point by quoting at large from Philo. Philo used the word in his own sense, one that can be arrived at only by careful study of his writings. The

Fourth Gospel also uses it, but gives to it quite another connotation. So was it with the subsequent use of *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις*, and other words which the Church borrowed from the schools, to put upon them her own stamp, and make them serve her own high uses.

Still, we have not yet reached what is perhaps the heart of the battle. We accept Dr. Hatch's positions as regards the general influence of Greek thought upon Christian truth, with the large deductions already hinted at. There was a period, as every student of history knows, when the Christian religion was brought into close contact with Greek philosophy, when it at the same time largely influenced and was influenced by it. The only question is concerning the nature and extent of that influence. Is it true, as Dr. Hatch contends, that the earliest Christianity meant nothing but obedience to the Sermon on the Mount, and that Greek philosophy destroyed that pure and simple individualistic religion by its sophistries, its definitions, its substitution of the intellectual for the moral, and of dry creeds for upright lives? Or is it the fact that the comparatively simple outline of Christian doctrine, which existed from the very first, was during the third and fourth centuries, under the influence of Greek thought, elaborated with an amount of detail and a fine accuracy of definition to which it had formerly been a stranger? Did the Greek influence imply *additions* to the primitive faith, or, as the Nicene fathers continually maintained, did the creeds of those days but reassert what had been believed from the beginning, explicitly defining what had always been implicitly held by the faithful from the first? That

is a point capable of being argued; but Dr. Hatch, with the view he takes of primitive Christianity, has no opportunity of fairly arguing it. The question, What is meant by development, and how far is it legitimate? is always meeting us in theology. Are we to say that the Romish doctrine of Purgatory is only an unfolding of, or a legitimate deduction from, the doctrine of the New Testament and the early teaching of the fathers, or that it is an addition of such a kind as to amount to gross perversion? Does the close and precise definition concerning the mystery of the Incarnation which characterises the Creed of Nicæa amount to a similar perversion of the simplicity of the early faith?

We are not about to enter on this discussion. It is always more or less difficult to say what are the legitimate "logical consequences" of a given doctrine. Newman's definition of corruption, in opposition to legitimate development, as "the destruction of the norm or type," or as "that which obscures or prejudices the essential idea" of a doctrine, errs, as Mozley pointed out long ago, by recognising only the corruption which takes place through failure and decay. His series of seven tests to distinguish a true from a false development—Preservation of Idea, Continuity of Principle, Logical Sequence, and the rest—are futile to detect the causes of corruption which have issued in modern Roman Catholicism. Corruption by excess is not only possible, but it has taken place in sadly large measure in the history of Christianity. Was there such corruption in the fourth century, when the form of Christian doctrine was more or less determined under the influence of Greek thought? Dr. Hatch makes the

extreme assertion—one which reveals much as to his whole attitude of mind on this subject—that "a definition of what has hitherto been undefined is necessarily of the nature of an addition" (p. 327). Surely this is to beg the whole question. It is a commonplace of ecclesiastical history that the early creeds were forced upon the Church by the multiplication of heresies, and that fathers and councils were compelled to define, were it only to say what the Christian creed from the beginning was *not*. A believer in the Apostles' Creed can hardly tell what he means when he says, "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord," till analysis, whether styled metaphysical or not, has enabled him to unfold the thought wrapped up in those simple words. In the doctrine of the New Testament itself there is development, at least in the sense of a growing apprehension of the truth, "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" in Christ from the beginning. And, taking the development manifest within the covers of the New Testament as a norm or guide, it would not be difficult to argue that the development discernible in the Nicene Creed is legitimate, an unfolding of what was present in germ from the beginning, rather than a series of disfiguring, distorting, corrupting additions.

That the work of creed-making in the fourth century was perfectly done, no sane man would assert. The unseemly quarrels and contentions which attended it show that the reverend fathers who debated at Nicæa and elsewhere were not perfect in temper. It is almost as obvious that the subtle, over-refining, speculative spirit of Greek thought, which ultimately half-ruined the Eastern Church, did at one time colour far too deeply the writings of some of the fathers, and in some

instances exercised a positively mischievous influence over the Councils of the Church. It is quite possible for one who believes that the Nicene Creed expressed, as well as it could be done in the language of the time, the beliefs concerning God and Christ, which had been virtually held in the Church from the beginning, to believe also that the element of Greek metaphysics, which has been wrought up into the constitution of Christian thought is excessive, and that in course of time much of it must perish, as much has already perished in the course of centuries. This, however, is a position so different from that of Dr. Hatch, that the two can hardly be compared together; and it is with the views of the Hibbert Lecturer, not with the above much more practical question, that we have now to do.

We have not space to point out the many passages we had marked as containing questionable statements or deductions. Dr. Hatch's treatment of the word *dogma* is itself enough to make us distrust him as a guide, learned as he is. Falling back on the original etymology of the word, he emphasises the element in its meaning of *personal opinion*, quoting from Epictetus and Sextus Empiricus to show that it includes—"(*a*) A strictly personal feeling, and (*b*) a firm conviction, not a mere vague impression." He goes on to say that "the acquiescence of a large number of men in the same affirmation gave to such an affirmation a high degree of probability; but it did not cause it to lose its original character of a personal conviction, nor did it afford any guarantee that the coincidence of expression was also a coincidence of ideas either between the original thinker and his disciples, or between the

disciples themselves." But a slight examination of the usage of New Testament writers[1] will show that this is a one-sided description of the meaning of the word, and the application of it subsequently made to the doctrines of the Christian Church is misleading. Dr. Hatch wishes to show that "subjective and temporary convictions," the mere "opinions of a majority," were "elevated to the rank of objective and eternal truths." But when Christians spoke of δόγματα, they were thinking, like St. Luke and St. Paul, of authoritative utterances, not of the personal opinions of majority or minority, and the connotation of the word in their minds was not derived from the language of Epictetus or Sextus Empiricus, or any Greek philosopher of them all.

Take as another example of statements, unintentionally misleading, the following. After describing the Stoical idea of God, Dr. Hatch says: "In primitive Christianity we find ourselves in another sphere of ideas; we seem to be breathing the air of Syria, with Syrian forms moving round us, and speaking a language which is not familiar to us. For the Greek city, with its orderly government, we have to substitute the picture of an Eastern sheykh, at once the paymaster of his dependants, and their judge. Two conceptions are dominant, that of wages for work done, and that of positive law." Now, not to press the point previously

[1] See Luc. ii. 1, and Acts xvii. 7, where δόγμα is used of a decree of Cæsar; Acts xvi. 4, where it is used of the authoritative decisions of a Church Council; Ephesians ii. 15 and Colossians ii. 14, where the idea of personal opinion, "that which seems good" to a man, or a number of men, is expressly excluded. The idea of "ordinance" springs from δοκεῖν easily enough by another line of derivation. It is used in this sense in Plato (*Legg.* 644 D), in Demosthenes, and in Xenophon.

urged about "primitive Christianity," let us take the author's own unwarrantable description, and find it only in the Sermon on the Mount. We open upon the Lord's Prayer—"Our Father which art in heaven"; where is the "Eastern sheykh" with his "wages" and "positive law"? Is he to be found in the Saviour's description of Him "who causeth His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and His rain to fall upon the just and the unjust"? or in the description of Him who would have us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, because our Father knows we have need of "all these" other things, which in due course shall be added unto us? The "Oriental sovereign who issues definite commands," who "inflicts punishments that are vindictive and not remedial"—where is He in this "primitive Christianity"? And if, as Dr. Hatch goes on further to suggest, it be said that the idea of God held by the Christians of the fourth century was corrupted by the ideas of Greek philosophy, it would be easy indeed to show how far from the ideas of Epictetus on the one hand, and of Plotinus on the other, was the sublime teaching of Origen and Chrysostom, Athanasius and Gregory. "Hebraism," to use Mr. Arnold's pet phrase, "had left its mark upon the Greek fathers, as well as Hellenism," and the sentences about the "Eastern sheykh" suggest, not a picture, but a caricature.

This is but a slight notice of a learned, able, yet most unsatisfactory book. Our examination of it has been superficial, because to have analysed minutely even one of Dr. Hatch's positions—say his description of the Christian idea of God as influenced by Greek philosophy—would occupy much space and imply much

technical discussion. But if our comments have been general, we hope they have not been unfair. We have so high an estimate of Dr. Hatch as a learned and able theologian, a broad and generous-minded man, and further, we have so much sympathy with many of his views, that we should be loth indeed wittingly to misrepresent him. The positions taken up in these Lectures, however, are so extreme that they must defeat their own end. Instead of drawing attention to what may have been excessive in the influence of Greek philosophy upon Christian truth, Dr. Hatch sets his readers asking continually, What is the writer's idea of Christianity as it originally was, as it ought to be, and perhaps may again become? A writer who so strenuously contends that a certain primitive purity, which he never defines, has been corrupted by Greek metaphysics and sophistry, should be more explicit, if he wishes to be effective. This is the best statement we can find of Dr. Hatch's own view of the scope of his work:—

"I venture to claim to have shown that a large part of what are sometimes called Christian doctrines, and many usages which have prevailed and continue to prevail in the Christian Church, are in reality Greek theories and Greek usages changed in form and colour by the influence of primitive Christianity, but in their essence Greek still. Greece lives, not only its dying life in the lecture-rooms of universities, but also with a more vigorous growth in the Christian Churches. It lives there, not by virtue of the survival within them of this or that fragment of ancient teaching, and this or that fragment of ancient usage, but by the continuance in them of great modes and phases of thought, of great drifts and tendencies, of large assumptions. Its ethics of right and duty, rather than of love and self-sacrifice; its theology, whose God is more metaphysical than spiritual—whose essence it is important to define; its creation of a class of men whose main duty in life is that of moral exhortation, and whose utterances are

not the spontaneous outflow of a prophet's soul, but the artistic periods of a rhetorician; its religious ceremonial, with the darkness and the light, the initiation and the solemn enactment of a symbolic drama; its conception of intellectual assent rather than of moral earnestness as the basis of religious society—in all these, and the ideas that underlie them, Greece lives."

This paragraph illustrates in several respects the unsatisfactoriness of Dr. Hatch's work. The assumption that "the ethics of right and duty" are Hellenic rather than Hebraic; the insinuation that to attempt to define the nature of the Christian's God in opposition to the God of the Gnostic or the Pantheist is undesirable or wrong; the sneer at the class of men "whose main duty in life is moral exhortation," though the writer has been complaining that Greek philosophy had well-nigh destroyed the ethical element belonging to primitive Christianity—these are only specimens of many *petitiones principii* with which these Hibbert Lectures abound. In closing, the writer gives us to choose between two theories. One is, that Christianity, which began and won its early victories without these Greek elements, may throw off Hellenism once more, and "stand out before the world in the uncoloured majesty of the Gospels." The other is, that Christianity was intended from the first to be a development, and to grow by assimilating to itself various elements in the soil of human society; and that "it is the duty of each succeeding age at once to accept the developments of the past, and to do its part in bringing on the developments of the future. We hold distinctly by the latter view. Christ said to His disciples: "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." As it was impossible for His disciples in His lifetime to discern the whole meaning of His person and His work,

as it was impossible for the Christians in the upper room at Jerusalem to see the whole bearing upon the Jewish and Gentile worlds of the new principles which they held as it were in solution, as it was impossible for the readers of St. Paul's Epistles to unfold the sublime truths they contain in their bearing upon Sabellian and Arian speculations yet unborn; so it is impossible for us to arrest the growth of the great Tree of Life which God has planted for the healing of the nations, and fix some stage in the development of its truth or worship or organisation as a standard of primitive simplicity beyond which it should never have passed, and to which it should as soon as possible return. The oak cannot again become an acorn. The man cannot return to the "simplicity" of childhood. As Bishop Westcott wisely said many years ago: "To transfer a form of one age unaltered into another is in most cases to be faithless to that very principle of continuity by which we claim to be children of the first century, or the fourth, or the ninth, or the thirteenth. We are the children of the men who lived then; we cannot be the men themselves." [1]

It is indeed sadly certain that there has been much in the growth of this plant of renown which is not divine. Again and again, as tares spring up among the wheat, it must be said, "An enemy hath done this." It is the part of the Christian historian to study most diligently the records of the past, that he may enable his contemporaries to learn the lessons of the present and prepare for the needs of the future. The Romanist believes in development, such as has

[1] "Aspects of Positivism in Relation to Christianity." See Appendix i. to his *Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 266.

issued in modern Ultramontane Catholicism. The Anglican believes in development along a *via media* determined by the traditions, opinions, and decisions of the first six centuries. The Protestant recognises no standard or criterion but the voice of Scripture, and is prepared to judge all subsequent developments according to whether they are, on the one hand, an accurate unfolding of the contents of Scripture, or, on the other hand, needless accretions, or a positive perversion of its teaching. We are not afraid of that "analysis of Christian doctrine" which Dr. Hatch insists upon as so important for the present time, and as an unpopular task, in which he is virtually a pioneer. But if such analysis is to be fruitful, it must be just and accurate, not partial and misleading. Nothing is more difficult than to preserve a perfect balance of mind while tracing the growth of ideas, in assigning to its own source each element of thought, when the entwined threads have for long formed one continuous web. Dr. Hatch possessed in an eminent degree some of the qualities necessary for this difficult task, but for lack of the rest his work is a comparative failure. It contains materials which others will use, lines of thought which others may follow out. But the Christianity of the future, on which Dr. Hatch dilates with so much enthusiasm, will be a larger, richer, more fruitful religion than he, than any of us, contemplates. The tree which God has planted, and which God has cherished, God will bring to perfection. Christianity is the heir of all the ages; it will take the spoils of all the climes. This city of God shall abide and grow, and "the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and their honour into it." And of it shall be said, as of

all Divine work, in nature and in grace: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." And, "as the heavens are higher than the earth," so shall it be seen at last that the highest human conceptions of truth are excelled by the simplicity of Divine revelation.

VII.

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

A HISTORY of Christian apologetics would be very instructive. Even a superficial examination of the subject, extending from the *Apologies* of Justin and Tertullian down to the *Aids to Faith* of thirty years ago and Dr. Bruce's *Apologetics* of to-day, shows that the methods employed by defenders of the faith have varied from generation to generation, from century to century. They have varied, like the armour and weapons and tactics employed by the besieged repelling besiegers of material citadels, and fighting for altar and hearth over stone ramparts against fleshly foes. The defence has varied as the methods of attack have changed. The embrasure out of which arrows were shot from cross-bow and arquebuse is exchanged for parapets from which rifled cannon threaten ominously, and the armour-plated ship is strengthened again and yet again against the torpedo and the heavy ordnance of the turreted vessel attacking it. The comparison holds in another and deeper sense. For, as the succession of deadly duels between warring nations is not ended by any of the changes in armour and military procedure, and never will end till the passions which give rise to

war are brought to an end, so the age-long conflict between faith and scepticism, the assailants and the defenders of Christianity, does not change its essential character with the changes which mark the method of the warfare. That long battle will never come to an end till the human heart is renewed, and human life regenerated, by the working of that power which is able to subdue all things unto itself.

There is nothing arbitrary or artificial about these changes in the mode of theological warfare. Christianity has a thousand sides; there are ten thousand ways of assailing it, and, at least as many of defending a religion which is wide as the world, lofty as God's thoughts, and deep as the profoundest needs of humanity. The line of defence must be as long as the line of possible attack. Canada could be invaded by the United States at any point along a line some three thousand miles in length. Christianity is a historical religion, open to all the objections, while possessing all the advantages, of a religion based upon historical facts. Its sacred records go back to the Creation. They touch, or appear to touch, upon physical and other sciences at a hundred various points; they are involved with the history of nations; and the documents themselves have been subject to the vicissitudes of all MSS. handed down from distant times. Hence, before the very substance of the religion itself is reached, there are scores of points at which historical research, literary criticism, and physical science may raise questions and present difficulties. Further, those who profess a religion which claims to be a direct revelation from God, declaring truths beyond the power of treason to discover, must be prepared to meet

objections, criticisms, cavils from every point of the argumentative compass, while more than triple brass will be needed to clothe the men who represent a religion which undertakes to regenerate mankind, men who attempt to "turn the world upside down," and effect a complete and uncompromising revolution in its words and ways, its modes of thought, and habits of life.

But further still. The *kind* of vindication of religion which commends itself to one generation seems to another quite beside the mark. The moral and spiritual needs of mankind in one sense are always the same, but in another sense they vary from generation to generation. The truth which was potent to arrest and excite our fathers is to-day a dusty truism, lying secure and valueless among our disused mental furniture. But such a truth has not lost its significance because we do not happen to feel the need of it, and our children will furbish it up in due course, and boast of its discovery, pluming themselves, as we have done, over their own wisdom, so superior to that of their fathers. Fashions come round in other matters besides dress. Lord Bacon described the "idols," the false, delusive appearances of the "cave" and the "tribe" and the "market-place," deceiving the individual, the race, or a particular society in its common social intercourse. None the less are there false lights which lead astray the generations severally, and men who laugh at the folly of their ancestors in being deluded by a will-o'-the-wisp, which presents no attractions to them, are led astray as easily and as fatally by an *ignis fatuus* of another colour and aspect.

Hence arises the ready but shallow sneer at "obsolete" Christian evidences. The evidences of

Christianity are, like its early creed, fashioned in response to assaults from without, and when the attacking army has failed at one point and shifted its quarters, the abandoned trenches and earthworks behind which the assailed defended themselves have an air of purposelessness. They are deserted because they are no longer wanted. So it has happened with what are known as "external" evidences, the arguments of Butler and Paley in the last century. There is nothing obsolete about the arguments of these two masterly reasoners. The *Analogy* remains an almost perfect, if not very artistic specimen, of solid masonry erected against the Deistic position. Paley's reasonings, at which it is now the fashion to sneer, are unanswerable so long as the evidence of human testimony is held to be admissible in defence of miracle. If the Deist becomes an Agnostic, and the sceptic who tried to show that Christianity was founded on imposture, sneers instead at the pious but ignorant delusions of fools eighteen hundred years ago who would believe any story of the supernatural, it is not the "evidences" current in the eighteenth century that have been proved feeble or inadequate. The proof of their sufficiency lies in the complete change made in the point of hostile attack and the methods employed in conducting it.

It is clear, however, that in our own day the defenders of the Christian faith must be prepared both to furbish up old weapons and to forge new ones. Historical and literary criticism of the Scriptures must be met, each upon its own ground, by those well acquainted with the field. The hottest fight some twenty-five years ago was waged round the documents of the New Testament; in our own time the Old

Testament has borne the brunt of the battle. Whether Christians like it or not, however weary they may have grown of the very sound of the word "criticism," it is absolutely necessary for apologists to meet upon their own ground and fight with their own weapons men who profess to show that the Scriptures are untrustworthy or misleading. "Lower," or textual criticism, is recognised as a science, in which orthodox and heterodox meet side by side, determining the accuracy or inaccuracy of tradition as regards the words of the original text. "Higher," or analytical criticism, is also a science, younger indeed, less fully formed and much less reliable, but its methods of investigation into the authorship, date, and structure of literary compositions are rapidly being formed, and critics in this department must be met neither by sneers, nor hard names, nor by dogmatism, but by candid and straightforward argument on the part of men at least as fully acquainted with the contents of Scripture as themselves.

All this, however, is "caviare to the general." However popularised the discussion of some of these vexed questions may be, there is a lingering feeling that the considerations at issue do not form the basis of faith for the multitude. The few must be prepared to argue out every question raised with regard to so sacred a book as the Bible, and every one is concerned in the character of the issues reached. But the world will not stand still while critics are analysing Deuteronomy; and the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour, which sustains the artisan in the midst of his toil, and the invalid in the sharpest pangs of her suffering, does not depend upon the question whether Moses wrote all the books of the Pentateuch with his own hand. Is it a

fact, men are asking amidst all the current discussions about the Old Testament, that our faith as Christians depends upon the maintenance of traditional views concerning the authorship of those books? The Bible is a priceless treasure, all Christians are agreed; every part of it possesses a sacredness which no Christian can bear to see for a moment infringed upon or slighted; its soundness and trustworthiness must be maintained in detail, as well as in general, so far as truth will admit, by those who are competent to discuss the subject. But Christianity, it is being freely said, is not, properly speaking, a book-religion. It possesses a direct access to the human heart and awakens a direct response in human life. Is sufficient account taken of this fact in the elaborate constructions of Christian apologetics? Is the intuitive apprehension of its Divine character, the direct and powerful testimony of personal knowledge and experience, to count for nothing as an argument? Others besides the author of *In Memoriam* have known what it is when "faith had fallen asleep" to hear the voice, "Believe no more," and hear an "ever-breaking shore that tumbled in the God-less deep." When the triumphant answer to that cold and chilling voice came from within, when

> "A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath, the heart
> Stood up and answered, *I have felt*,"

was that a delusion, or a mere "subjective" reply available only for him who experienced that inward glow? Christian records, Christian testimony, Christian philosophy, Christian ethics, Christian influence,—all these have contributed to strengthen the fabric of Christian

apologetics; is there no valid and available argument in Christian experience?

The thoughts of many are moving in this direction. Many readers are well acquainted with Dr. Dale's *Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, and will remember how in that work both the argument drawn from Christian experience, and that drawn from the literature of the New Testament, are exhibited and urged in a popular but masterly way. The position taken up is that the historical trustworthiness of the books of the New Testament can be conclusively proved, and the larger part of the book is occupied with a sketch of that proof in the full light of the most recent research. But at the same time it is contended that there is a more direct argument, the force of which is quite independent of literary discussion. He states it thus—

"The faith in the living Christ, of those who have had the great experiences of His power and grace which I have described, is not shaken by any assaults on the historical trustworthiness of the story of His earthly ministry. Much less can it be shaken by discussions concerning the nature and origin of the ancient Scriptures of the Jewish people. Their confidence in the books, both of the Old Testament and the New, may perhaps have to be suspended until the controversies of scholars are closed, or until, on historical and critical grounds, they can see their own way to firm and definite conclusions about the main questions at issue; but not their confidence in Christ. They may be uncertain about the books; they are sure about Him. Both Christian scholars and the commonalty of Christian people approach the controversies on these ancient records with a settled faith in the power and grace and glory of Christ. Their faith in Him rests on foundations which lie far beyond the reach of scientific and historical criticism. They know for themselves that Christ is the Saviour of men; for they have received through Him the remission of their own sins; He has translated them into the Divine Kingdom; He has given them strength for righteousness, and through Him they have found God."

Dr. Dale is one of the last men to base upon a foundation of mere sentiment conclusions which ought to be logically reasoned out, and the former part of the book, which is devoted to the "Argument from Experience," is a piece of masculine and vigorous reasoning, no less convincing to the mind than appealing strongly to the heart and the practical sense of mankind. But it is so well known that there is no need to describe the scope of Dr. Dale's argument, though we shall have occasion hereafter to refer to one or two features of it.

Another work on this subject, in some respects more valuable than Dr. Dale's, is very little known. Published almost simultaneously with Dr. Dale's book, it shows how the minds of Christian thinkers were at work independently upon the same theme, each giving to their common argument a character and colour of his own. Dr. Lewis Stearns—whose decease in the prime of life shortly after the publication of this volume in 1892 was a distinct loss to the Christian Church in the United States—is almost unknown in this country, and now is likely to be known only by his Ely Lectures on Christian Experience, which deserve careful study, especially on the part of all Christian ministers. The writer of these lectures, though comparatively a young man, was evidently a practised student in the wide field of Christian philosophy and theology. He carries his knowledge lightly, and uses it easily and aptly. His style is clear, his arguments plainly and cogently put, and his temper is fair and candid towards opponents, while his grasp of evangelical truth is tenacious and unfaltering. There is nothing weak or sentimental about his treatment of the subject.

He avoids the rhetorical *petitiones principii* into which a writer on this subject might easily fall; and those who expect to find in Dr. Stearns' pages an example of the evangelical platitudinising which often characterises those who deal with personal experience, rather than rigorous logic or hard facts, will be disappointed. The philosophy which underlies the proof from Christian experience, and forms its necessary basis, is clearly expounded, as the two chapters on theistic and anthropological presuppositions show. The body of the work is occupied with the "Genesis of the Evidence: its Growth and Verification." Other lectures deal with philosophical and theological objections, while the relation of this particular branch to other Christian evidences is discussed both at the beginning and the close of the book.

It is not our present aim, however, to follow Dr. Stearns very closely. We desire to offer some suggestions upon a comparatively unworked field of Christian thought, but may at this point draw attention to the way in which Dr. Stearns shows the relation between this particular department and the system of apologetics generally. He says in one place:—

"The theological thought of our times has come to realise that a distinction is to be made between apologies of Christianity, which consist in a marshalling of the proofs demanded by particular attacks, and have therefore only a temporary value, and apologetics as a science, which has for its object the complete exhibition of the proof of Christianity, as well as of its principles and methods, and thus its defence against all attacks, from whatever quarter they may come. The old evidences, in spite of all the learning and skill expended on them, were apologies, and not scientific systems of apologetics. . . . What is needed is a positive system of truths adapted to all times and circumstances, by which we may not only meet attacks but forestall them, and carry the warfare into the enemy's country."

Dr. Stearns has himself furnished no inconsiderable contribution towards such a survey of apologetics, dividing the evidences into historical, rational, and practical. The first class includes the proofs for the reality of the facts of redemption, and is largely occupied with questions respecting the authenticity of the books of the Bible, as documents upon which we depend for our knowledge of these facts. Under "rational" evidences may be included all that goes to prove the intrinsic excellence of the Christian system, the way in which it meets the need of man, and its superiority to other religions. The practical evidence Dr. Stearns describes as manifesting itself in the *world*, which Christianity has done so much to raise and purify, in the *church*, and in the *individual*, as shown in the present influence of the Christian religion upon the community and the personal life of believers. Closely connected with the last of these is the theme of the author's work and of our article—the evidence of Christian experience, defined thus: "This is derived from the manifestation to the believer himself, in his own inward spiritual life, of the presence and power of God and the Christian religion. It is the evidence that is based upon the Christian's regeneration and sanctification."

The argument is, of course, not entirely new. The germs of it are to be found in the very earliest apologies, in the writings of Melito and Aristides, in the Epistle to Diognetus, the eloquent outpourings of Tertullian, and the philosophical disquisitions of Origen. Naturally, however, it was impossible in the earliest times to develop this line of argument fully even for Christians, while it was almost unavailable against opponents. Nor was it likely that such doctrine would flourish

amidst the ecclesiasticism of mediæval times. It is virtually a child of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The Reformers appealed from the authority of the Church to the authority of Scripture, and to the testimony of the individual spirit enlightened by the Spirit of God. "Enlightened by Him," says Calvin in his *Institutes*,[1] "we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are of God; but, in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured—as much so as if we beheld the divine image visibly impressed upon it—that it came to us, by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God." Richard Baxter, in his *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, enlarges in the copious way characteristic of the Puritans upon the various aspects of the Spirit's testimony to Christ, and in one of the manifold subsections of his exposition, says: "The fourth part of the Spirit's testimony to Christ is subsequent, in the work of regeneration and sanctification, in which He effectually illuminateth the mind, and reneweth the soul and life to a true resignation, obedience, and love of God, and to a heavenly mind and conversation, and so proveth Christ to be really and effectively the Saviour."[2] A different line was taken by Coleridge in England, and Schleiermacher in Germany; but the teaching of both these prepared, in different ways, for the increased stress which has been laid during the present century upon internal evidences and the testimony of the Christian consciousness. Amongst contemporary Germans, Dorner and Dr. Frank of Erlangen are the

[1] Book i. chap. vii. vol. i. p. 95. Ed. Calvin Transl. Society.

[2] *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, part ii. chap. vi. sec. 10, iv. *Works*, vol. ii. p. 105.

writers who have developed most fully the argument from experience. The sections referring to this at the beginning of Dorner's *System of Christian Doctrine* are known to many; but, unfortunately, the involved style of Professor Frank and (if the truth must be told) his somewhat cloudy thought have prevented his work on *The System of the Christian Certainty* from exercising much influence upon opinion.

The most important new feature in the presentation of this argument is the attempt to give it a scientific character. There is not a little jealousy in some quarters over the use of the word science in connection with religious matters, but all that is meant by it is carefully ascertained and thoroughly verified knowledge, the best attainable in every department of human thought. Theology ought to be scientific in the best sense of the word, though the means of ascertaining exact truth in this department differ widely from those employed in physical research. It might appear, however, that the phenomena of Christian experience do not come within the category of science at all. The world loudly asserts this, and some Christians weakly admit the misrepresentation. Dr. Stearns, in one place, well says:—

"The work upon which we are engaged is one of the highest scientific importance. Let us not unwittingly copy the unbeliever's attitude towards Christian experience, and treat it as though it were a matter of sentiment rather than a subject of rational thought. . . . Let us have the courage of our convictions. If we are right, here is a field for scientific research of the utmost importance. . . . If we are not ashamed to make the Christian consciousness a source of theology, why should we be ashamed to make it a ground of evidence? Even unbelief no longer treats the experience of the Christian as a mere delusion, but regards it as a

series of phenomena possessing the highest and most striking psychological interest, to which it strives to give a rational, though of course rationalistic, explanation."

The argument thus opening up before us is valid only within certain limits. Obviously it does not avail against the Agnostic or the Secularist, for, until the way is clear, and the preliminary positions of the existence of God, the soul, and a future life established, there is no common ground on which to meet. Clearly, also, the argument from experience can have weight only with those who admit the fact of sin and the need of deliverance from it. If sin be explained away as a "defect of race, a taint of blood," salvation, in any moral and spiritual sense of the word, is as unnecessary as it is impossible. But, for men who believe in God and the spiritual nature of man, yet find themselves unable or unwilling to enter upon the complicated questions of literary documents and historical criticism, there is unquestionably a direct, universal, and most powerful argument in favour of the truth of the Christian religion to be drawn from the phenomena of Christian experience. We cannot admit that it is confined to those who are the subjects of this experience. For them, except in moments of extreme depression or severe temptation, this argument is paramount. "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." The Christian has "the witness in himself," and a study of this argument can only serve to show him how defensible on the most rational grounds is that intuitive knowledge, which, for him, needs no elaborate reasoning to establish it.

But that Christians themselves should be convinced, it may be said, is a matter of course. It is desired

to formulate a valid argument of scientific character which should have weight with those who have not experienced for themselves the power of Christian truth to change heart and life; one, moreover, which is not to be confused with that drawn from the outward moral effects of Christianity in the world. Such an argument is one based upon *facts*, and it is to give testimony and authentication to other great *facts*. The argument quoted above from Calvin is intended rather to authenticate the Scriptures and the system of Christian doctrine drawn from the Scriptures. It is that *testimonium spiritus sancti* of which we read so much in the writings of the Reformers, which assures the believer, and the believer alone, of the Divine authority of Scripture as able to make him wise unto salvation. It is distinct again from that assurance of personal salvation vouchsafed to the believer, of which we read in Rom. viii. 15, which the Westminster Confession speaks of as "an infallible assurance of faith," and which proved so blessed and useful an element in the Evangelical revival of the last century, when Wesley and the early Methodists urged it as a privilege of all believers, to the immense quickening and deepening of personal religion. These things are all-important in their place. But is it possible to frame an argument of a more comprehensive character, reasoning from the unquestioned facts in human experience and character, to the alleged spiritual realities which are the cause and the foundation of the whole—an argument which will not only confirm the faith of the believer, but prove an additional buttress to the great structure of Christian evidences, in a time when the forces openly attacking or secretly undermining Christianity are many and great? What

are the facts upon which such argument rests, and what conclusions may be drawn from them?

The outline of Christian experience is substantially the same in hundreds of thousands of cases in every generation. Millions of men throughout the history of Christendom have been prepared to "set their seal to this that God is true" as regards the fulfilment of the promises of His Word in their own history, and they would describe their experience with infinite variety of detail, but with the same essential features. In each case the truth *finds* the man. Either by the preaching of the Word, or by some message which contains the same glad tidings of God's love to sinners in Jesus Christ His Son, and in and through the existing community the Church, representing the company of those who have passed through the Christian experience themselves—by some one or other of these means, or a combination of them, a man is arrested from without, the truth finds him and lays hold of him. The message begins with what Dr. Stearns calls "the arraignment," the charge of sin and announcement of penalty. The echo of this is heard in the conscience, and a response is made when the sinner is "awakened" in repentance. Repentance is an act of the whole man, the mind, the feelings, and the will, and is followed by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, similarly an act of the whole man, as he rests upon God's mercy in and through Christ for salvation. Thereupon, as with more or less clearness, tens of thousands will gladly testify, there ensues an indescribable change, effected both in heart and life. Not only is there joy instead of sorrow, gladness instead of gloom, but new thoughts are awakened in the mind, new aims, new interests, new sympathies, and new

moral and spiritual power, are manifested in the life. There is a change in the will, the intellect, the feelings, and the conscience. Each man is distinctly conscious that he has not wrought this for himself. It is often done suddenly, often quite unexpectedly, always accompanied with more or less of glad surprise. "When the Lord brought again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." It is *the* turning-point, however, in life. Sometimes it proves to be of transient effect, sometimes men may doubt its reality: it is too often counterfeited, and the whole subject has been too frequently overlaid by cant and false sentiment. But, speaking broadly, for whole communities of Christian men and women, generation after generation, the experience above described has been as real as any other event in their history, far more important than any other, and has been avowed as a crisis revolutionising the whole of their life.

Argument would be of little avail, but for this last feature. If this experience were like St. Paul's vision in 2 Cor. xii., when whether he was in the body or out of the body he could not tell, and heard things which it was impossible for man to utter, such an event could hardly be said to have a real existence for any but the person immediately concerned. The analogy, however, is with Paul's vision on the road to Damascus. That not only converted a soul, but it changed a life. The initial stage of Christian life forms only the "Genesis of the Evidence"; the further course of Christian service marks its growth, its steadily increasing verification. We need not sketch in detail the transition from regeneration to sanctification, the growth of the spirit of love to God and man as a new principle of

life, the increasing power over sin, the growth in knowledge as well as in grace, the increasing likeness to Christ the Lord, the increasing ability to serve and influence others, which are the recognised features of Christian life, where a man is faithful to the principles he professes and the calling with which he has been called. It is more to the point to notice that this verification is detailed, observable in detail by the Christian as regulating his own inner life, as well as by others who see a certain measure of the result in the life without. Doubtless, there are fluctuations, sometimes sad and discouraging enough. But, in the main, the verification is discernible, and it is strengthened by repeated instances of answers to prayer, by communication with others and corroboration in abundance received from fellow-Christians.

It may well, however, be considered a question whether these features of the Christian life come sufficiently within the scope of "science" in any sense of the term to afford material for exact investigation and cogent argument. This is the pith of the whole matter. Has Christian experience a clear, definite, assignable "evidential value"? On this subject, Dr. Stearns says:—

"The entrance into the sphere of Christian experience follows the scientific method in that it is a transformation of probable knowledge into real knowledge by experiment. It is emphatically real knowledge which it claims to have. The very term experience indicates this; it implies the existence of objects with which we come into actual contact. We do not experience the first principles of thought or the processes of logic and mathematics. Still less do we experience the knowledge of probability. In every case, experience implies the presence of real existence acting

directly upon, and in our consciousness. Accordingly, the certainty belonging to Christian experience is not a mere moral certainty, but a true certainty."

In other words, the fundamental character of Christian experience is that it is based in *real knowledge* and possesses the certainty which belongs to such. The words that we have italicised have a technical meaning which should be clearly apprehended. There are different kinds of human knowledge, varying according to the sphere of thought or life with which they are severally concerned. The methods by which such knowledge is first ascertained, and afterwards tested and verified, vary accordingly. Some of this knowledge is probable only, but its scientific character is not affected by that. No one complains that the methods of pure mathematics are not available (without modification) in the region of mechanics, or that the methods of applied mathematics are not available, say, in the region of history. The science of historical criticism has its own rules, it must be based to a large extent upon testimony—*i.e.* upon only probable evidence —yet it reaches conclusions as valid within its own area as the deductions of Euclid in the sphere of pure geometry. In Christian experience there is, no doubt, a considerable admixture of merely probable knowledge. It has its assumptions and working hypotheses, its partial inferences, its growing assurance, its merely moral certainties. But in its fundamental character it belongs to *real knowledge*, as bringing us into direct contact with spiritual realities, known to be such, not with a moral, but an actual certainty. All of us recognise the distinction in Christian life between mere notional (often called intellectual) acquaintance with Christian

verities and a real or experimental acquaintance with them. The life of a true Christian is one continuous passage from the notional to the real. He is continually *making his own* the truths of Scripture—*i.e.* verifying in his own experience what would otherwise be to him mere ideas in a book or in his own mind. Such knowledge, we may well contend, implies not merely a personally comforting, but a scientific certainty. It is that which St. John claims for himself and others, not as those who had literally seen Christ, but who had obtained immediate indubitable knowledge of Him for themselves—"that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life." And again the same note is struck at the close of the Epistle which sounded at its opening—"We *know* that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. . . . We *know* that we are of God. . . . We *know* that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." St. John deliberately avoids the γινώσκειν which indicates a process, the gradual acquisition of knowledge, and repeats the οἴδαμεν of direct, intuitive, complete possession.[1] The direct and immediate contact with spiritual realities gives a certainty to knowledge as assured as that of our own existence.

We must not stay to discuss the question whether Dr. Stearns does not press some of his points too far. What he calls "the Trinitarian knowledge of Christian

[1] The subordinate clause in ver. 20 ἵνα γινώσκωμεν (R.V. γινώσκομεν) shows that St. John does not forget that gradual acquisition is in some sense needful.

experience," knowledge of working of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, may, no doubt, be maintained as bearing out the general teaching of Scripture, and so confirming it for the believer. Whether more than this can be said is doubtful. The authority of Frank may be quoted for the attempt to establish the Christian doctrine of the Trinity on these grounds, but his argument on this subject is the weakest part of his work. We can fully accept Dr. Stearns' statement that the Christian "verifies by his experience the Christian concepts of Father, Christ, and Spirit in their broad outlines." The cumulative strength of the argument deducible from the slow, steady, constantly repeated verification of Christian truth in Christian experience cannot be expressed in words. We quote one significant sentence from Dr. Stearns:—

> "When we consider the evidence upon which men base the larger part of their daily conduct, to what a small extent actual first-hand knowledge enters in, how much depends upon hypotheses and analogies more or less reasonable, how much upon the unverified testimony of others, how much upon mere instinct,—when we consider this, and compare with it the increasing evidence which the Christian has in his advancing experience, it is not too much to say that we have a far better foundation for the reality of the things we are concerned with in our spiritual life than for that of the things of our secular life."

A very large part, however, of the argument upon this subject must consist in the meeting of objections. Most persons are prepared for the statement of Christian certainty based upon experience, but they are not convinced by it or prepared to grant to it a scientific character, because of doubts or objections floating more or less vaguely in their minds, of which they cannot rid themselves. Dr. Dale devotes one

lecture to this subject, but hardly deals with it, as it seems to us, with sufficient fulness. Dr. Stearns, on the other hand, enumerates so many objections as somewhat to bewilder the reader and obscure the exposition. We fasten upon a few of those which it seems most desirable to face and answer.

1. The most obvious and plausible of all objections is that the experience described is private, peculiar, to use a cant word "subjective," and hence not capable of being made the basis of scientific argument. To this, however, there is an easy double reply. In the first place the "particularism" of Christian experience is only such as it shares in common with all science. Only to the few is it given to examine for themselves bacteria through the microscope, or stars through the telescope, and fewer still are capable of working out for themselves the mathematical problems necessary to use the knowledge which the telescope affords. If in religion it is necessary to "taste and see" that the Lord is good, and if the experience above described is enjoyable only by those who comply with certain conditions, that does not make their knowledge less real or the evidence it affords less cogent.

But the experience may be universal, and is so in the sense that it is accessible to all, and has been enjoyed by men the most diverse under the most diverse conditions. A plant which will thrive anywhere and maintain its essential characteristics unaltered, might well be described as universal in its habitat, and "particularism" can hardly be asserted of such phenomena as those of Christian experience. Dr. Dale describes very touchingly a kind of incident which, as he truly says, "must have often occurred." He

supposes a Christian scholar harassed in the morning by doubts concerning the reality of the redemptive facts and his own experience in relation to them to go out in the afternoon visiting the poor:—

"He sat by the side of some poor, aged, and illiterate man, whose strength was slowly wasting, and the conditions of whose life were very cheerless; but the old man had travelled by the same path that all the saints have travelled. As the scholar listened, he could recall at point after point, identical experiences of his own. It was as if the man were telling the story of years which he had spent in some foreign country which the scholar also had visited. They had seen the same cities and harbours and churches and palaces, the same ruins, the same mountains and rivers, the same crops, the same trees and flowers. The old man's account of them was very different from what his own account would have been, the old man's theories and explanations of them and his own were still more different, but it was certain that what he had seen the old man had seen."

We draw special attention to the last sentence. This is the test of reality, the "objective" as opposed to the subjective. Vary the conditions, the language, the theories, the point of view, then, if the essential features of the experience present themselves in spite of all, it is clear that nothing but direct knowledge of the same great realities will account for the facts. Where could this be better illustrated than in a typical Methodist class-meeting?

2. It is usual, again, to raise the stock objection that all this is "mere feeling." Feeling of course, is present, but it is the very touchstone which distinguishes the shallow and counterfeit from the real and deep experience that in the latter there is so much more than the mere feeling which characterises the former. As Dr. Stearns very well says: "Feeling is a

source of knowledge, but it is not a faculty of knowledge." There is only one faculty of knowledge, the intellect, and while feeling has a most important place in Christian experience, it should be kept in its place. It must never be forgotten that our Christian knowledge is derived from the intellect and the will as well as the feelings, and, as *knowledge*, it is reached by the intellect alone, to which it can always give good account of itself. The experience which is resolvable into mere sensibility proves nothing; the experience which affects the whole man—mind, heart, conscience, will, and life—and is cognisable by the sanctified intellect, proves a great deal.

3. Closely connected with this is the objection that Christians imagine a great deal, "persuade themselves" that what the Bible describes as the normal experience must be theirs; in other words, that in this case mere feeling alone is awakened and that of an artificial or imaginary kind. That there are such cases, no one would deny. If there be a real Christian experience, there are as sure to be imitations, as the uttered sound to awake an echo. But one marked feature of Christian experience is that the feelings, the imagination, the expectations, are so often disappointed. And, as Mr. Wilfrid Ward has shown in his *Wish to Believe*, the very desire for the blessings which the experience is to bring makes the true man more critical in his examination of himself and of the facts, fearful lest he should deceive himself and holding the good news "too good to be true."

4. The objection that the same kind of assertion can be made in relation to other religions is fully dealt with both by Dr. Stearns and Dr. Dale. In the first place,

the statement is not wholly true. Taking Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as illustrations, it may be shown in each case that the parallel by no means holds good. And if, to a certain extent, there is an analogy in the case, say, of one of the best and most spiritual representatives of a non-Christian religion, it is by no means part of our argument to deny that there are elements of truth in most, if not all, religions, and that those who are tenaciously true to such light as they have, find access to God, and a religious power and reality in connection with their worship and service, which goes to show that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him."

But we must stay our hand in recapitulating objections, none of which are more formidable than those we have instanced. Let us ask instead: What may, and what may not, be proved by this kind of evidence, and how does it stand related to other parts of Christian apologetics?

It is quite clear that it in no sense supersedes or interferes with the use of the Bible. It cannot prove anything with regard to the several books of Scripture; this must be settled by critical inquiry. But the substantial trustworthiness of Scripture teaching, and to some extent of Scripture facts, is established, and confirmation is given to the authority of Scripture as the one rule of faith and life, by the correspondence with its teaching as exhibited in the actual experience of Christians.

Further, such inquiry as has been here pursued does not in any sense supersede the need of careful dogmatic investigation and definition; does not diminish

the importance of systematised theological thought, but rather emphasises the need of it. Experience can prove nothing concerning the doctrine of the Trinity or the person of Christ, in its metaphysical aspects, though sound doctrine on these subjects is in many respects confirmed by experience. Experience cannot obviate the necessity of exact analysis—*e.g.* into the nature of sin or the meaning and grounds of justification—but it at the same time calls for such investigation, and helps to establish its results. The pedestrian might as well try to dispense with the mapmaker. The traveller is, on the other hand, most thankful for the map, the topography of which he confirms by his own observation. If here and there he finds occasion to criticise or question the accuracy of his map, the doubt can soon be resolved, and the testimony of an independent witness is all the more valuable.

Again, this line of argument does not by itself prove the substantial truth of the Christian religion, or obviate the necessity for examination into its character in comparison with other religions—the exhibition of what are usually called internal evidences. But the evidence of Christian experience does put a stamp of its own on this, as on all other kinds of evidence, removing it from the region of the subjective to the objective—from the sphere of the theoretical to the practical. This it is which enables us to contrast Christianity so favourably with Confucian moralising and Hindu philosophising. Surely it adds a weight of incalculable importance to all arguments concerning the fitness of Christianity for man's needs, when he who is urging them can adduce his own testimony, "It works, for I have proved it," and add the personal experience of millions like himself.

The question of the relation of the evidence of Christian experience to that derived from miracles and prophecy would almost require an article to itself. There is a strong disposition at present to discredit external evidences. As we have hinted, there is a danger of this being carried too far. It is unwise of Christians to discard any bulwarks that have been of service, because they are not needed at the moment. They may—they will—be wanted again. Meanwhile, it is undeniable that, for the present generation especially, there is a directness and a power about the argument from Christian experience which no external evidence based on the supernatural could possibly possess. It may be said, moreover, that in Christian experience there is direct evidence of the supernatural—moral miracles being wrought, as it were, before our very eyes. Even now, as when John Baptist sent messengers to Jesus, "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised up," when "the poor have the gospel preached to them."

We close by asking whether practical use may not be made of the line of thought we have been pursuing. Surely this is no mere abstract question of theological polemics. It would be difficult, we think, in these days of mental unrest and religious anxiety, to name any subject of more practical and living interest. If we have discussed it largely from the point of view of the scientific theologian, it has been in order that the foundations of sound argument might be well and truly laid. But if there be anything of truth in the general contention of this article, that the value of Christian experience as an element in Christian evidences has

hardly as yet been duly appreciated, and that for the needs of the present generation that argument should be much more fully developed and brought to bear in the conflict between faith and unfaith, the subject deserves a practical consideration, such as we have only space to sketch and leave with our readers.

1. The first and perhaps the best effect of all would be to stir up Christians to live better and more distinctively Christian lives. The force of this argument is blunted by nothing so much as the outward inconsistencies and the inward haziness and dulness of experience caused by unfaithfulness to Christian privilege and duty. What a brightening of personal religion ought to result, and would result, from an attempt to brighten up this portion of the Christian armour! If Christians had a clearer vision of spiritual truth, a fuller personal enjoyment of it, and a firmer, more tenacious grasp of spiritual things as the only realities, much of the current Christian "apologetics" would be unnecessary.

2. Greater confidence and boldness on the part of Christians with regard to this feature of their life is desirable. They should not be afraid to insist upon that which they know to be reality, and to claim that it should be everywhere estimated as such. There is no need to obtrude the sacred things of personal religion upon those who have no appreciation of them, but, on the other hand, the Christian is not to accept the world's estimate of his religion as something vague, impalpable, unreal, the dream of meditative moments, too shadowy to bear the light of day. It was characteristic of the early Christians to "speak the word of

God with boldness," the testimony of their own personal experience included.

3. It would be easier to approach critical problems from this side, and adequately to fill in the whole outline of Christian apologetics, if the practical, experimental part of the argument was once placed upon a firm foundation. It is not true that the critical problems of biblical literature can be settled by the same kind of arguments only which might be used in the case of Greek histories or other ancient records. The abstract discussions which delight the souls of many Germans and some Englishmen are of little avail for the actual determination of biblical difficulties. Many fine-spun theories are simply so many cobwebs, easily blown away by the first breath of wind from the experience of actual Christian life. Much of the critical analysis of our time is of the wire-drawn fine-spun *à priori* character, which in the case of the schoolmen is ridiculed as unsubstantial speculation, and which is only tolerated in this practical age because the impression somehow prevails that it is "scientific." A simple-minded Christian who has proved the power of God in his own heart and life can afford to smile at the dreary speculations of rationalists, who examine St. Paul with the vision of the blear-eyed man criticising a picture he cannot really see.

4. If duty in this matter devolves upon any one part of the Christian Church more than another, it is the Methodists who are called upon to bestir themselves. Of the two writers whose books we have referred to, one is a Presbyterian and one a Congregationalist. True, Dr. Dale often proved himself in this matter more Methodistic than many Methodists, and not

once or twice only did he hold up the standard of Christian experience, personal assurance, experimental knowledge, when it seemed as if those who professed to be the standard-bearers showed some symptoms of faltering. There is a great field here for a Methodist theologian. There is a greater still for the Methodist Church in the sphere of practical life. But in such a question as this the name "Methodist" is an impertinence, the name "Christian" only can be recognised. In the glorious task of raising the standard of Christian experience and setting it forth more completely as an element of incalculable importance in Christian evidence, "names and sects and parties fall," for in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." All may take part in an apologetic which is not of the study nor of the schools, but of the heart, the will, and the life. And when this line of Christian defence is fully manned and fully worked, there will be no need of any other, for from such lives, as in the case of the Thessalonian Church of old, the word of the Lord will be "sounded out" as from a trumpet, so that others "need not to speak anything."

VIII.

THE SERVICE OF MAN: POSITIVIST AND CHRISTIAN.

CHRISTIANITY is "an anvil that has worn out many a hammer." Some of these hammers have been slight and flimsy enough, so that the first contact with wrought-iron has shattered them; but others have been stout and heavy, deftly wielded by stalwart arms. The strokes on the anvil at all events have been well-nigh incessant, the assaults on the city of God have continued almost without intermission, and each fresh attack has been heralded by a loud flourish of trumpets and prophecies of easy victory, fading gradually into less assured tones and dying away into the silence of utter defeat. The priests and Sadducees who punished Peter and John for preaching the doctrines of the "New Way," thought to destroy it at its earliest inception, but they ended by "doubting whereunto these things would grow." The attack of Celsus in the second century was able and bitter; but it is significant in more ways than one that the arguments of the heathen philosopher are known to us only by Origen's replies. The earliest centuries of Church history are named after the "Martyrs and Apologists," and it was natural that such a religion as Christianity in such a world as the decadent Roman empire should be compelled both

to witness and to fight. But throughout the history of Christianity apologists have always been needed, and martyrs have never been wanting. The centuries which witnessed the multiplication of heresies were also a period of warfare against enemies more subtle, more dangerous, more persistent than open assailants like Celsus and Porphyry and Julian; but the Church triumphed, and the memory of many heresies remains only in the articles of her formulated creed. The Church of the Middle Ages had not the same foes to fight, yet her sons in their building were compelled to hold the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other, as they helped to rear that massive edifice, the strength of which consists in its divine stones and its weakness in its human mortar. The humanists of the Renaissance revived Hellenist sneers at the religion of the Cross, just as they echoed the songs in praise of the life of Nature and the senses which had sounded in the temples and groves of that Greece "where burning Sappho loved and sung"; but the Reformers showed how to vanquish reviving Hellenism by a revived gospel message of glad tidings to all people in Christ, their living Lord. In the eighteenth century unbelief had made such progress in England that, in the well-known ironical words of Bishop Butler, it had "come to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is at length discovered to be fictitious." Yet Wesley's Journal tells another tale; the Evangelical Revival, as well as the *Analogy of Religion*, answered the confident assailants as with a trumpet-peal, so that Toland and Collins are forgotten except by historians, and their boasted Deism is to-day discredited and obsolete.

But, it is said, the assaults of the nineteenth century are of quite another character. All previous attacks, we are told, have been child's play. Now the battle is being waged along the whole line. The key of the position has been seized, and it is already virtually carried; we are assured that the walls which have stood so firmly for nearly 2000 years now totter visibly under repeated blows, so that it is clear to all intelligent observers that they must soon fall. We seem to have heard this a good many times before, and are not perhaps sufficiently impressed by such Homeric boasting. But we are ready to admit a portion of this statement. We believe that the attack on Christianity now being made, some waves of which have fallen upon us, but the full force of which is yet to come, is more serious, more thorough, more determined, and far more carefully organised than any previously experienced. It is, first of all, more fundamental. Previous conflicts have raged round certain doctrines or aspects of faith, this touches its very core and centre. The present conflict is, further, more general. It touches on every side. We cannot open our Bibles without being reminded of one aspect of it, we cannot argue on any moral or social question without having other aspects forced upon us. New views of life, of man's position, character and destiny, are making a great gulf between near neighbours; and too often members of the same family find themselves sadly arrayed on opposing sides. Lastly and chiefly, this opposition to Christian faith is more thoroughly organised and complete, more fully reasoned out, it is based upon wider generalisations and implies wider and more far-reaching issues than perhaps ever before. The rapid and uninterrupted progress

made in physical science, the apparent certainty of its methods, the revolutionary character of some of its hypotheses, the apparent incompatibility of some of its conclusions with modern orthodoxy, and the impossibility of demonstrating by physical methods the lofty claims of spiritual truth,—these are only some of the considerations which distinguish the conflict in which we are engaged from others, perhaps at the time seeming not less serious, not less vital, in which Christianity has previously gained a complete victory.

We have no misgivings as to the issue. It would not be difficult to give reasons for such confidence quite outside our own personal faith in the Christian religion as Divine, absolute, and sufficient for the world's needs. Such reasons would be drawn from a view of the nature of the conflict only to be obtained from a wide outlook. In our own opinion the worst of this battle has not come yet, and the prospect will not clear till that shock is over. But the period is rather one of birth-throes than of death-pangs. The issues between faith and unbelief need to be more clearly understood, prejudices on both sides need to be removed, the relation to each other of the realms of truth in question must be more distinctly defined, and then, after a conflict which must be sharp and may not be very brief, the victory of faith is certain. But victory may not come precisely in the way we expect. New truth has to be assimilated, purged of the elements of error with which unbelief has invested it, and then to be claimed and used for God in Christ. As secular movements have never been free from the influence of spiritual forces, so the Church has often learned important lessons from secular movements. She has some such lessons to learn

in the nineteenth century, and some of her representatives are by no means apt scholars. But that the human intellect will be satisfied to take up its abode in the blind alley of Agnosticism is as impossible as that the human heart should find rest in the dull despair of Pessimistic Materialism. Once more we shall prove that "this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith," if we are but faithful to Divine truth, and not unduly anxious about human systems.

At present we are only concerned with one part of this great conflict. We leave altogether on one side such philosophical questions as are raised by anti-supernaturalists concerning miracles, and such critical and historical questions as are raised in hosts by rationalists concerning the character and authority of our sacred Scriptures, merely remarking by the way that Mr. Morison's treatment of these topics in his *Service of Man* is absurdly superficial, and that he jumbles together Strauss, Baur, Keim, and Hausrath, taking for granted the exploded "mythical" theory of the origin of the Gospels with a calm confidence which would be amusing, if in many quarters it were not likely to be dangerously misleading. But this is not the present battleground. Issue between Christian faith and unbelief is to be joined in discussing the perennial problems of Morals and of Man. Our opponents profess to be strong here or nowhere. The most destructive critics must construct something somewhere, under penalty of being exposed before the world as utterly impotent and sterile. The assailants of Christianity of the present day, therefore, having, we must not say stolen—"convey the wise it call"—but

gained from Christianity,[1] or elsewhere, a certain "enthusiasm of humanity," are using this as a telling cry. The *Service of Man* is their watchword. They loudly contend that none but they understand what man really needs, and might obtain, if theologians would but let him alone, and confidently boast what the new Gospel will do for man when—as must soon happen—it has a clear field for its operations. Positivism professes to believe in and cultivate only the tangible, the definite, the scientifically verifiable, and in the welfare of man she professes to find sufficient scope for practical energy, sufficient inspiration for her highest efforts. She banishes God from the earth that she may the more completely laud, cultivate, and serve humanity. In this field she elects to labour; in it her claims may best be tested. Success here must mean for Positivism an important gain; failure here must mean failure utter, complete, irretrievable.

Here, therefore, let us join issue. For this purpose we might select two of the strongest existing champions, so far as we can judge, of the anti-Christian host. Mr. John Morley and Mr. J. Cotter Morison are amongst the most representative and vigorous of those who propagate the Positivist Gospel for mankind. They are further suitable for our purpose because both are thoroughgoing in their advocacy. They will hear of no half-measures in dealing with the old and, as they consider it, effete Gospel of Christianity. In such writings we shall study to advantage the new Gospel of Man, and if, in the compass of a short article, we can-

[1] How far Positivists are indebted to Christianity has been admirably shown, amongst others, by Rev. W. Arthur. See his *Religion without God*, i. pp. 134, 159, etc.

not deal fully with their arguments, we can at least show where these new apostles profess to find us, and where in all probability they are likely to land and leave us.

Whatever be thought of Mr. Morley's political or other opinions, he stands out as one of the strongest men of the day. His style reflects the man. It has the hardness, the brightness, and the elasticity of tempered and polished steel. His words, weighty and well-chosen in themselves, are welded into sentences which bite deep, and cleave to the very heart of his subject. The range of thought is not wide, and certainly neither sublime nor profound; but depth, in our sense of the word, Mr. Morley would regard as a vice, and within the range which he marks out for himself he sees clearly, thinks vigorously, wills strongly, and writes as only a man so clear-thoughted and strong-willed can write. Both his thought and style are for the most part cold and hard; but he is not devoid of emotion, and on occasion gives us glimpses of the crater of a volcano beneath a covering of snow and ice. And when these cold hearts do burn, it is with a glow and intensity that melts the very rocks in the mountain's core. Mr. Morley, moreover, stands out as a man who has the full courage of his convictions, and a little more. He is the standard-bearer of "No Compromise." He cannot find words bitter enough for those who halt between two opinions, or who, having renounced the old faith, hesitate to say so. He desires, though not precisely in Voltaire's spirit, to carry on Voltaire's work, to promote the "Revolution" in the nineteenth century as Diderot did in the eighteenth, and he would esteem it a service to the race if he could render aid *écraser l'Infâme.*

It is only with this aspect of Mr. Morley's works that we are concerned. We have carefully read and re-read all Mr. Morley has written, including a number of essays which, happily as we think, have not been republished in the collected edition of his works, but we can present only a sample of his language and arguments. We are the more anxious to say this because of Mr. Morley's chosen method of dealing with the great subject of religion. He nowhere faces his antagonists in direct argument. His compositions may be called critico-historical, and perhaps from their very form can hardly be expected to argue out the questions at issue between Christianity and unbelief. But even where opportunity offers room for argument—and in the shorter essays this is not seldom—Mr. Morley hardly ever favours us with it. He is masterly in making assumptions. He thoroughly understands the art of fence, and knows well, where faith is concerned, how much more effective is a bold assertion accompanied by a clever sneer than whole pages of serious argument. Not that we would accuse Mr. Morley of conscious artifice; he is above that; but, having no religious faith of his own, and believing that that which exists is mischievous, as all superstition must be, he deals with Christianity as a dream from which all sensible men have awakened—an allusion pleasant in some respects, but no more to be argued with or seriously discussed than the fancies which flit through the brain of the sleeper, and at which on awaking he only smiles. Now this is very convenient, but it is not argument. It may be magnificent as tactics, but it is not war, and cannot be allowed to pass without protest. Mr. Morley finds it suits his purpose to take it for granted, without

discussion, that of God and the supernatural nothing can be known.[1] The words that he puts into the mouth of Chaumette, relating to the attack upon Christianity made by the dogmatic Atheism of 1793, evidently represent his own views of the more excellent way in which the Christian Church is to be undermined in the nineteenth century, and are so characteristic that we must quote them at length :—

"You, he might have said to the priests—you have so debilitated the minds of men and women by your promises and your dreams, that many a generation must come and go before Europe can throw off the yoke of your superstition. But we promise you that they shall be generations of strenuous battle. We give you all the advantage that you can get from the sincerity and pious worth of the good and simple among you. We give you all that the bad among you may get by resort to the poisoned weapons of your profession and your traditions—its bribes to mental indolence, its hypocritical affectations in the pulpit, its tyranny in the closet, its false speciousness in the world, its menace at the deathbed. With all these you may do your worst, and still humanity will escape you, still the conscience of the race will rise away from you, still the growth of brighter ideals and a nobler purpose will go on, leaving ever further and further behind them your dwarfed finality and leaden, moveless stereotype. We shall pass by you on your flank, your fieriest darts will only spend themselves upon air. We will not attack you as Voltaire did. We will not exterminate you. We shall explain you. History will place your dogma in its class, above or below a hundred competing dogmas, exactly as the naturalist classifies his species. From being a conviction it will sink to a curiosity ; from being a guide to millions of human lives it will dwindle down to a chapter in a book. As history explains your dogma, so science will dry it up ; the conception of law will silently make the conception of the daily miracle of your altars seem impossible ; the mental climate will gradually deprive your symbols of nourishment, and men

[1] *Compromise*, p. 75, etc.

will turn their backs upon your system, not because they have confuted it, but because, like witchcraft or astrology, it has ceased to interest them."[1]

This extract illustrates, what many others would confirm, the "masterly inactivity" with which Mr. Morley hopes to conquer in his conflict, as did the Tiers État in 1789. But this method will impose only upon the foolish and superficial; and the thinker who refuses to argue upon the gravest questions that can occupy the mind of man, calmly taking his own sceptical premises for granted, must either condescend to come down from his philosophic pedestal and mingle in the fray, or be content to be left high and dry to the consolation of his own arrogant and unproved denials.

Mr. Cotter Morison's book, entitled *The Service of Man*, has other claims upon us. When published a few years ago, it attracted attention quite out of proportion to its intrinsic merits, and was highly praised by critics to whom the world naturally looks for a trustworthy judgment. The explanation is not far to seek. It is true that the attack upon Christianity which the book contains exhibits a failure to understand the religion assailed, which is remarkable in the biographer of St. Bernard; and its constructive attempt to define and formulate the "Service of Man" in a Positive sense is neither full nor specially able. But the style of the book is clear and attractive; it makes no great demand upon the reader, while in a decided and unhesitating tone, supported by plausible arguments, the writer does not shrink from definitely formulating what many are thinking but have not dared to say

[1] *Miscellanies*, vol. i. pp. 80, 81.

aloud. An outspoken attack upon received authority is generally popular; and the attack on Christianity made in this volume is undisguised and uncompromising, while the repudiation of ideas which, in name at least, profess to bear sway in this country, is complete. Since Mr. Morison's position is substantially that of Mr. John Morley, though differently occupied and defended, the conjunction of the two names will give us an opportunity of inquiring what are the views of modern Positivist teachers on Man; his position, duties and destiny, and in what relation the new doctrine stands to the old. Does the service of God, as these writers assert, bar the way and prevent the development of the true service of man? or does it, as the Lord Jesus Christ teaches, constitute the only way by which we can understand what man is—rightly approach the work of helping him, and then faithfully and strenuously carry it out? That is a fair issue, and no Christian will hesitate to meet it with alacrity.

First of all, let it be distinctly understood that the primary and fundamental service to man which is here offered is to deprive him—or to free him, if the phrase be preferred—of his God. Comte is the teacher of Morley and Morison alike, and he says in his *Catechisme Positiviste*: "Humanity has once for all substituted itself for God, without for a moment forgetting His provisional services"; and again: "To-day there remain but two camps: the one retrograde and anarchic, wherein God confessedly presides; the other organic and progressive, systematically devoted to Humanity." Mr. John Morley has, happily for his own credit, given up his foolish trick of spelling the

name of God with a small letter, while he spelled his own name with capitals; but he loses no opportunity of showing us that, in his opinion, as with Diderot, "l'idée de Dieu manque d'actualité." He says:—

"Those who no longer place their highest faith in powers above and beyond men are for that very reason more interested than others in cherishing the integrity and worthiness of man himself." [1]

And again, in a striking passage, which we cannot quote at length, contrasting the principles of Christianity and the Revolution, the old and the new, and urging that the latter only can supply "the forces to be trusted for multiplying the achievements of human intelligence, and diffusing their beneficent results with an ampler hand and a more far-scattering arm," Mr. Morley says:—

"Faith in a divine power, devout obedience to its supposed will, hope of ecstatic unspeakable reward—these were the springs of the old movement. Undivided love of our fellows, steadfast faith in human nature, steadfast search after justice, firm aspiration towards improvement, and generous contentment in the hope that others may reap whatever reward may be—these are the springs of the new." [2]

The very basis of all his thinking, as Mr. Morley tells us again and again, is "the great Positive principle that we can only know phenomena, and only know them experientially." It is true that, as Mr. Morley's admirers have urged, this philosopher, who is so content to live "without God in the world," does not exactly desire to live without religion. He complains that "religion is not that supreme, penetrating, controlling,

[1] *Compromise*, p. 89. [2] *Rousseau*, vol. i. p. 2.

decisive part of a man's life which it has been"; and again we read:—

"It is said, you forget that women cannot live without religion. The present writer is equally of the opinion that women cannot be happy without a religion, nor men either." [1]

But it must be a religion without God. We need, he tells us, to be led away by the negative truth that nothing can be known about God from the "sterile and irreclaimable tracts" of theology into a more profitable direction. Nothing must "interpose between humanity and *the beneficent sunbeams of its own intelligence, that central light of the universe.*" [2] Mr. Morley, like the author of *Natural Religion* and many modern writers, wishes to use sacred words with a new meaning, and, while keeping the old associations, to empty them of the old significance. The only religion he can conceive of is that of Humanity—this time with a capital "H"—and although he has too much sense to give his adhesion to the so-called Positive religion, and the worship of Comte's mistress, Clotilde de Vaux, Mr. Morley makes it perfectly clear that, for the consolation and stay which Christians have found in the worship of God, he is quite satisfied to seek in the service of man. Mr. Cotter Morison's book is founded on this idea, and we need not quote from him at length.

What, then, is the nature of the being thus raised, at least in his collective capacity, to the throne of the world, that highest beyond which we can know nothing? How do our new teachers answer the old question,

[1] *Compromise*, p. 176.

[2] See *Voltaire*, p. 72. The italics are our own. The phrases thus emphasised are worth pondering.

What is man? Man is of course only a part of Nature. Mr. Morison airily dismisses the late Professor Green's masterly reasoning to prove that the knowledge of Nature cannot be a part of Nature, as "an ascent into the fine æther of Kantian metaphysics." This is, of course, much easier than answering the argument. But for the Positivist no other view of man is possible than that he is simply a part of Nature, subject to the laws of causation which obtain in the physical world. Free-will is a figment, an illusion easily explained. Mr. John Morley in his *Diderot* gives an admirable exposition of Holbach's Determinism, especially of the "inexorable logic with which the Free-willer is left naked and defenceless before a vigorous and thoroughly realised Naturalism." The "doctrine of Free-will is virtually unmeaning."[1] Mr. Cotter Morison considers the "doctrine of Determinism to be now so generally accepted that he need not dwell on it." But he adds:—

> "Nothing is more certain than that no one makes his own character. That is done for him by his parents and his ancestors. No merit or demerit attaches to the saint or the sinner in the metaphysical and mystic sense of the word. Their good or evil qualities were none of their own making. . . . The sooner the idea of moral responsibility is got rid of, the better it will be for society and moral education. The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will, though of course they may be made less bad, etc."[1]

Let not our readers start at this plain-spoken declaration; it is the only consistent attitude for the Positivist to occupy, and we shall see immediately whither it leads.

[1] *Miscellanies*, i. 236.

No God—no soul—there is of course no immortality. The philosopher believing literally—

Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή τόιη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν—

that the lives of men fall like the red and yellow leaves of autumn, only to moulder in speedily forgotten dust, must content himself, as Mr. Morley does, that "men will be more likely to have a deeper love for those about them, and a keener dread of filling a home with aching hearts, if they courageously realise from the beginning of their days that the black and horrible grave is indeed the end." Mr. Morison, too, is clear that there is no vainer hope than that of immortality, which has so long deluded so large a portion of mankind. Tennyson's faith concerning

"The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm *For ever* from them, and they crumble into dust,"

is not the creed of our philosophers, who consider that the good and true can only be rightly understood when the God who rules the world having been eliminated, the hope of immortality which is bound up with belief in Him has vanished also.

We have no wish to represent the writers whose work we are considering as pursuing this work of destruction with a light heart. Mr. Morley especially feels the indescribable pathos of human life according to his view of it, and from time to time pens sentences which read like a very wail of pain. Speaking of Christianity he says:—

"In a world 'where men sit and hear each other groan, where but to think is to be full of sorrow,' it is hard to imagine a time when we shall be indifferent to that sovereign legend of Pity."[1]

[1] *Compromise*, p. 156.

But he goes on to say, "We have to incorporate it in some wider gospel of justice and progress." And there is a tone of moral self-complacency, reminding us of Lord Beaconsfield's "superior person," which distinguishes our Positivist philosophers as they calmly sweep Christian teachers out of the way, which is very edifying if we could quite believe in it. The worn-out ethics of Christianity are to be replaced by something better. Mr. John Morley talks with delicious coolness of the "higher moral ideas" taught by such philosophers as Voltaire and Diderot, and tells us of "the Churches now assimilating, as rapidly as their formulæ will permit, the new light and more generous moral ideas and the higher *spirituality* (italics ours) of teachers who have abandoned all Churches and who are systematically denounced as the enemies of the souls of men." He recognises the danger lest, when the old religion passes, morals should suffer; to quote his own words, the "peril of having made morals the appanage of a set of theological mysteries, and of its crumbling away with the false dogmas with which it has got mixed." So Morison reminds us that a "transfer of allegiance from one set of first principles to another, especially on subjects relating to morals and conduct, is dangerous." And Mr. Morley, in announcing that "Christianity was the last great religious synthesis"—it appears to be already a thing of the past—all that remains is that we "gather up provisionally such fragmentary illustrations of the new faith as are to be found in the records of the old."

This rouses our curiosity. What are the new ethics to be which shall rise in such sublime altitude above the Sermon on the Mount and the thirteenth chapter

of First Corinthians? Our new teachers are quite prepared and confident that when God, free-will, and immortality have been got rid of, they can furnish mankind with the true higher ethics. What glimpses of these do they give us?

Our first experiences are not encouraging. We take the very lowest step first, and ask what is Mr. John Morley's tone concerning the morals of his three great heroes, Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau? The illicit relations of Voltaire with the Marquise de Châtelet, the indescribable vileness of the *Pucelle*, Diderot's lying and perjury, his production of perhaps the filthiest book that ever was written—of which Carlyle says that if ever a man be obliged again to read it, he should bathe himself in running water and be unclean till the even—the lascivious and disgusting passages in Rousseau's *Confessions*, his characteristically heartless despatch to the Foundling Hospital of the children borne to him by his concubine,—what does our censor, who looks down upon the morals of Christianity, say to these things? They are certainly not commended, but there are few of them that are not excused or palliated. If it is possible to "damn with faint praise," it is equally possible to excuse by faint condemnation. It would not be just to Mr. Morley for a moment to represent him as approving of these abominations. He speaks strongly enough on occasion of such flagrant vices, but his tone on some questions of morals is anything but firm,[1] and he undoubtedly treats the gross stains of which we have spoken with comparative lightness as the peccadilloes of great men. His favourite device is to excuse them

[1] He admits (*Rousseau*, p. 218) that "*some* continence and order in the relations of men and women is a good thing."

by some reference to the errors of Christians. Either "chastity and continence had been overpraised by Catholics and were identified with that Infamous whom Voltaire had vowed to crush"; or "sexual morality had declined as the natural consequence of building on the shifting sands and rotting foundations of theology"; or "the morbid form of self-feeling is only less disgusting than the allied form which clothes itself in the phrases of religious exaltation." Or, again, this moral teacher ventures to say: "Blot out half a dozen pages from Rousseau's *Confessions* and the egotism is no more perverted than the *Confessions* of Augustine"; or he even has the audacity to compare the sickly, nauseous uncleanness of Rousseau, which marked his diseased soul through and through as with moral small-pox, wtih David's murder of Uriah and Peter's denial of his Master. We had almost come to the conclusion that a man who could pen such a sentence had lost all moral sensitiveness and incapacitated himself for all discriminating moral judgment. But there are many proofs in Mr. Morley's pages that his moral standard is in some respects high, and his moral susceptibility in many directions keen. We find in the above instance, however, an indication of what we may expect if the ethical landmarks which religion has set up should ever disappear. Other indications of the same kind will come in view shortly.

We proceed to inquire, then, more in detail, what are the basis and standard, the ground of obligation, and the sanctions of the morality which is to replace the Christian? The answer is, that

"the claims of morality to our allegiance rest on the same positive base as our faith in the truth of physical laws. Moral principles, when they are true, are at bottom only registered generalisations

from experience. They record certain uniformities of antecedence and consequence in the region of human conduct."

The standard is human happiness as interpreted by experience; and if any inquire more fully as to the meaning and bearing of such a statement, we must refer them to Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Data of Ethics* and Mr. Leslie Stephen's *Science of Ethics*, where they will find such satisfaction as is to be gained from our evolutionist masters on this subject. Ground of obligation there is none, except that each man naturally seeks his own happiness, and ought, therefore—though the link to supply this "therefore" is unfortunately lacking—to care for that of others. Do we ask for sanctions? We are told—and our knowledge of human nature will enable us to guess what kind of restraining influence such vague and empty words are likely to exert when the tides of passion run high and fierce—that "there can be no greater bitterness than the stain cast by a wrong act or an unworthy thought on the high memories with which a man has been used to walk, and the discord wrought in the hopes which have become the ruling harmony of his days." Knowing the terrible might of evil, which will snap cords like these more easily than a man brushes away a slight silver-tipped cobweb out of his path, and knowing the terrible anguish that this feebly restrained evil is causing every day among the sons and daughters of men, do we ask for some morsel of consolation, some glimpse of hope? We read that

"Our provisional acquiescence in the wasteful straitness and blank absence of outlook or hope of the millions, who come on to the earth that greets them with no smile, and then stagger blindly under dull burdens for a season, and at last are shovelled silently

back under the ground, can only be justified by the conviction that this is one of the temporary and provisional conditions of a vast process, working forwards through the impulse and agency of the finer human spirits, but needing much blood, many tears, uncounted myriads of lives, and immeasurable geological periods of time, for its high and beneficent consummation." [1]

Or, to quote Mr. John Morley at his very best in point of style, and when probably he is unlocking to us as much of his heart as he ever cares to open, breathing forth from its depths with a sigh such as surely beseems any man with a heart, in the midst of such a "wide, grey, lampless," but all too densely-peopled world—

"There are new solutions for him, if the old are fallen dumb. If he no longer believes death to be a stroke from the sword of God's justice, but the leaden footfall of an inflexible law of matter, the humility of his awe is deepened, and the tenderness of his pity made holier, that creatures who can love so much should have their days so shut round with a wall of darkness. The purifying anguish of remorse will be stronger, not weaker, when he has trained himself to look upon every wrong in thought, every duty omitted from act, each infringement of the inner spiritual law which humanity is constantly perfecting for its own guidance and advantage, less as a breach of the decrees of an unseen tribunal, than as an ungrateful infection, weakening and corrupting the future of his brothers. And he will be less effectually raised from inmost prostration of soul by a doubtful subjective reconciliation, so meanly comfortable to his own individuality, than by hearing full in the ear the sound of the cry of humanity craving sleepless succour from her children. That swelling consciousness of height and freedom with which the old legend of an omnipotent divine majesty fill the breast may still remain; for how shall the universe ever cease to be a sovereign wonder of overwhelming power and superhuman fixedness of law? And a man will be already in no mean paradise, if at the hour of sunset a good hope can fall upon him like harmonies of music, that the earth shall still be fair, and the happiness of every feeling creature still receive

[1] *Rousseau*, p. 186.

a constant augmentation, and each good cause yet find worthy defenders, when the memory of his own poor name and personality has long been blotted out of the brief recollection of men for ever." [1]

That is noble English, but as it charms the ear it mocks the heart. It clothes in the purple and gold of fine sentences the shivering frame of a starved and helpless philosophy, whose only language is a cry of despair. No wonder that the heart which holds such a creed is wrung to its depths. Such a prospect may well cause tears of blood. No God—no soul—no hope; only a blind, dumb, deaf, inscrutable nature, of which the miserable race of man forms a part, working under the stress of a stern necessity towards an unknown end, with here and there a noble soul striving out of sheer pity for his fellows to brighten the brief journey to a blank abyss with as strenuous activity for their passing welfare as he may.

"Nothing is gained by disguising the fact" [says Mr. Cotter Morison] and we italicise the words as characteristic of the new evangel—"*there is no remedy for a bad heart, and no substitute for a good one.*"

No remedy! Let the words ring again and again in the ears of all who are looking to Positive philosophers for light and leading. Bad hearts are not uncommon on the most optimistic theory. Some of us find it hard work to struggle with the bad we are conscious of in our own, and any who are trying to help others upwards do not need Scripture to testify to them of the deep-lying evils of the human heart. It is well, therefore, that those who are contemplating the Ethics of

[1] *Voltaire*, pp. 293–294.

the Future, and wondering whither these new guides who look down with such satisfaction upon the supposed ruins of Christianity will lead them, should distinctly understand that whilst for the welfare of mankind good hearts in human breasts are essential, for the bad there is *no remedy*. And back from the dreary hollows of the Porch where these modern Stoics recite their barren, hopeless creed comes the echo—no remedy!

Remedies of a kind may, no doubt, be discerned by the inquiring. It would require far more space than we have at our disposal to sketch the probable consequences of our going with Positivists to physical nature for our ethics. Indeed, the full consequences cannot be seen in the writers we are reviewing, because they are unconsciously affected throughout by the Christian sentiment which permeates the whole moral atmosphere of the day. Yet here and there are to be obtained glimpses of changes which would with startling rapidity sweep away ancient landmarks, were the restraints which Christian public opinion now imposes once fully removed. So severe a moralist as Mr. John Morley evidently sees no virtue in chastity *per se*—as how should he upon Positivist principles? He speaks of "mediæval superstition about purity," sneers at "the domestic sentimentality of a greasy kind" in the family-life of England in George III.'s time, excuses Diderot for "breaking the fragile sympathy of the hearth"—in other words committing adultery—because his wife's "narrow pieties and homely solicitude fretted him," and he is never tired of girding at the Christian Church for its asceticism—"what they call evangelical perfection is only the art of stifling Nature." And

why should a Diderot or any other beastly-minded philosopher stifle Nature?

But if Nature appears to deal with certain evils by permitting licence, on the other hand, she provides the only "remedy" Positivism knows, by teaching extirpation without pity. "No remedy for a bad heart?" That is quite a mistake; we exterminate vermin, and those who own bad hearts must be simply swept away, to make room for their betters. Evolution means the survival of the fittest. There is small evidence, by the way, that Nature knows aught of "fittest" in the moralist's sense, or that the progress of the race left to itself is a progress morally upwards. But, to quote the whole of a passage already referred to—

"The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will, though of course they may be made less bad, the sooner we shall come to the conclusion that the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men, and the careful cultivation of the good only. This is what we do in every other department. *We do not cultivate curs and screws and low breeds of cattle.* On the contrary, we keep them down as much as we can. What do we gain by this fine language as to moral responsibility? The right to blame and so forth. Bad men are not touched by it. But society, knowing its own interests, has a right to suppress him in some effectual way, and, above all, prevent his leaving a posterity as wicked as himself." [1]

Now we are reaching the "service of man" indeed. No remedy for the bad heart, therefore eliminate without ruth or pity. There is unfortunately little light cast for us on the nature of the process by which this choice is to be made, but we fear that in the new '93, which Mr. Morison hopes for when the present career of industrialism is ended and Socialism dawns to

[1] Morison, pp. 293, 294. The italics in the above passage are ours.

regenerate a decrepit world, that it will go hard with those whose creed conflicts with the infallible dogmas of Positivist Popes. What effect, moreover, this war of extermination would have upon the exterminators, who shall say? But by way of seeing something of the practical bearing of this doctrine on social questions, take a glimpse from Mr. Morison's Introduction, which forms really an appendix to his book—

> "A. and his prolific spouse must be made to realise that few evil-doers are more injurious to the world than they are. They may be models of virtue according to conventional ethics, but those ethics are out of date. The barren prostitute, on whom they probably look down with scorn, does not at anyrate aid in swamping the labour market, nor even in recruiting her own class as they do," etc.

Here our moralist touches the fringe of a complicated, delicate, difficult problem, and we expect the professed teacher of "the service of man" to do so with the delicate discrimination and insight befitting one who knows something of the perils surrounding it on every hand. How much delicate discrimination is manifested, the above extract may serve to show. We are not going to discuss the topic here, though it is one that Christians must not shirk when it is pressed upon them; but one who knows anything of the life of the great cities of the Continent, and certain phenomena of middle-class life in the United States, not to speak of the teeming evils in our midst at home, will judge what would be likely to be the "fruits of philosophy" such as this.

We have not left ourselves much space to speak of the Christian service of man, which is often so seriously misrepresented by Positivists. By Mr. Morley Chris-

tianity is apparently identified with the Catholic Church of the *ancien régime*, though he, of all men, ought to know better, and he need not have gone beyond the limit of his own kindred for a representative of a type of Christian as far removed as possible from the Court Bishop of the time of Louis Quinze. Mr. Cotter Morison's descriptions of Christianity, if they had come from a writer of less repute and with fewer friends among the critics, would have been pronounced beneath contempt. We may briefly point out the following ten fallacious assumptions as specimens of a much larger number:—

1. Mr. Morison assumes without proof, and in face of facts, that "the authority of Christianity is so shaken that its future survival is rather an object of pious hope than of reasoned judgment" (p. 9).

2. He assumes without proof that the ascertained results of science are fatal to the truths of Scripture (p. 16).

3. He takes it for granted that "if ever a thesis was demonstrated, it is that man has not fallen but risen, and that from the lowest level of animal existence." He misrepresents the doctrine of the Fall, and calls it a "mere fiction of primitive cosmogony" (p. 24).

4. Similarly he assumes that "belief in miracles will shortly die a natural death" (p. 25).

5. He takes for granted the "mythical theory" of the origin of the Gospels, long ago given up by competent judges as shallow and insufficient (p. 32).

6. He totally misrepresents Paul's teaching about the clay and the potter (Romans ix.), identifying the exaggerations of extreme Calvinists with pure Christianity (p. 37).

7. He shows an utter inability to understand how the Christian religion has been a real solace to men, and quotes Thomas à Kempis, Bunyan, Jeremy Taylor, and others, like a man born blind discussing colours (pp. 61–78).

8. He blindly misrepresents the Christian doctrines of grace and faith and forgiveness, wholly misunderstanding the Christian writers whom he quotes, and even venturing to refer to our Lord's language to the thief on the cross, as if Christianity necessarily implied Antinomianism (pp. 93, etc.).

9. He identifies the teaching of Christianity with the corruptions, excesses, and barbarities of ages of superstition, infected from the dregs of the old world idolatry and demoralisation, loading his pages with equivocal stories of the uncleanness of many churchmen of the Middle Ages, to prove, we presume, that the morality of the New Testament is of a low and insufficient type.

10. He misunderstands and misrepresents Christian teaching concerning holiness, or, as he calls it, "saintliness," representing the "genuine saint as a moral genius of a peculiar kind" (p. 197, etc.).

But our readers are probably weary of such an enumeration, though in making it the only difficulty is to know where to stop. We have chosen this method of description rather than a more minute examination of the misrepresentations in question, partly because of the exigencies of space, partly that readers might understand how utterly incompetent such a writer proves himself for the task of describing Christianity, of estimating its hold on men's hearts, or of forecasting its future influence on mankind. The statements we

have quoted are hardly ever supported by argument, and yet a friendly critic pronounces this "the most powerful attack upon Christianity that has appeared in this generation." What force and weight of argument the rest must have manifested, if this be the most powerful assault of all! We fear, however, that the critic speaks for many who are never so impressed as by bold, unhesitating assumption; who totter and shake at the very sound of the hostile trumpet, if it be only blown from brazen lungs and with a brazen front. Some Positivists, at least, seem to expect the repetition of the miracle of the falling of a city's walls at the mere blast of a trumpet exceeding long and loud.

The true nature of the Christian service of man, however, happily needs little exposition from us here and now. The Christian replies to the Positivist that—(1) he has borrowed from Christianity all the essentially moral ideas of his teaching. Much of that teaching is not moral at all; its Hedonism, its Evolutionism, and other kindred elements, simply have nothing to do with morals. A man without personality and freedom is not, cannot be, morally responsible, and with that basis gone the whole ethical structure falls to the ground. Yet in the taking phrase, the "service of man," there are moral ideas, and these are obtained from Christianity. The word "serve" comes from Him who said, "I am among you as He that serveth." Who taught the nobility of service but Jesus Christ, and how long has man been learning the lesson! The idea of the welfare of man as man comes from Christianity, and Positivism has stolen it and marred it in the stealing. It is not *men* whom Positivism cultivates and serves, but the vague abstraction "man," while it calmly hands over crowds of

sinning, suffering men and women to the fate of "screws and curs and low breeds." And so far as there is aught that moves and stirs the human heart in the thought of serving man, it comes from the Christian religion.

Christians say (2) that Positivists unspeakably degrade man by the view of his character, position, and destiny put forth in their system. Proceeding as they do upon undemonstrated and undemonstrable premises—that we can only know phenomena; that God, if there be a God, cannot reveal Himself; that miracles are impossible; that human nature is the highest we know, and to be judged solely in terms of the physical nature of which he forms a part—all the light of human life is struck out at a blow. By this method no room for argument is left, no common ground possible upon which opposing forces might meet; and now, as ever, there is no dogmatism like the double-distilled dogmatism of denial.

Christians say (3) that there is no motive force in the system thus confidently propounded to raise or purify the world. This is in large measure admitted by the representative teachers to whom we have been listening. No freedom means subjection to an Order which must, by hypothesis, be blind and unintelligent; no standard but happiness implies the inability to raise those who prefer to be happy in their own way; no ground of obligation implies a lack of moral leverage, a feeble moral dynamic such as belongs to every naturalistic system of morals; and "no remedy for a bad heart," is the confession of one of the latest and most earnest propagandists of the Positive creed. Mr. John Morley looks forward to a "vast process," needing

"immeasurable geological periods of time" to reach a "high and beneficent consummation," which may just as well, for aught he shows us, prove a vast and irretrievable ruin. History does not encourage us to hope much from the practice of nineteenth century, any more than of eighteenth century, encyclopædists and philosophers. Diderot belonged to his century. But Comtism at its core has no more life or power in the realm of morals than the French philosophy of a hundred years ago. A tree is known by its fruits. But we must not stay to show what is the nature of the fruit which Positivism so far has brought forth.

And Christians appeal, lastly, to a long and noble history, not unmarked by blots and stains, which they mourn over, but cannot by tears wash out, yet a history in which the "service of man" rendered by Christianity has surely been no small and inconsiderable factor. We cannot condense the argument of Dr. Storrs' *Divine Origin of Christianity* into a page, or this page should set forth the splendid answer which that book gives to Mr. Morison's petulant complaints concerning the Christian religion. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.* Christian civilisation is far from being what it ought to be. Yet to what issues would the element of "civilisation" have brought Europe without the element of Christianity? Let the declining Roman empire of the year 93, and the youthful French Republic of the year 1793, join to answer that question. Christianity claims to possess the only power the world has yet seen competent to raise the fallen, purify the degraded, strengthen the weak, emancipate the slave, to cleanse and sweeten the whole moral and social life of man on earth, while preparing, as Christians believe, even the

vilest and worst for a better life to come. Christianity has done these things, done them in all climes and countries, done them through succeeding centuries, done them in spite of apparently insurmountable difficulties; in spite of the incessant and irreconcilable opposition of the sensual, the worldly, the selfish, the unbelieving; in spite of the weakness and unfaithfulness of so many of her own disciples; and in spite of the materialisation and corruptions incident to the working of a divine and celestial religion in the midst of a tainted and sinful world.

Christianity claims to be judged partly by what she is and partly by what she has done; not by either taken alone. Science believes in verifiable hypothesis. The working hypothesis that Christianity is divine has been verified by (1) what this religion has accomplished in the service of man, where it has had free scope and opportunity; (2) by the clear evidence that where Christendom has failed it has been because Christians have fallen so far short of the pure and lofty standard they professed to obey. The potent nature of the moral and spiritual force wielded by Jesus Christ and His religion in the earth is beyond cavil, and Christians point to what it has done as but the earnest of what it is capable of doing. Mankind does not want a Deity "defecated to a pure transparency." Men thirst for the living God. Even Mr. Morison has found this out, and tells us that "what pious hearts wish to feel and believe is the existence behind the veil of the visible world, of an invisible Personality friendly to man, at once a brother and a God. An anthropomorphic God is the only God whom men can worship, and also the God whom modern thought finds it increasingly difficult

to believe in." It is because Christianity, and Christianity alone, reveals such a God, and, to Agnostics of every generation, says fearlessly, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare we unto you," that it has proved, and will ever prove, the one power fitted to serve and in serving to raise man, as he can neither be served nor raised by Agnostic Positivists. The answer to the shallow and impotent philosophy which boasts of its service to man, and cannot find a remedy for a bad heart, is found in the simple testimony of the Lancashire drunkard, quoted very recently by one who knew well what he was saying: "Religion has changed my home, my heart, and you can all see it has even changed my face. I hear some of those London men call themselves Positivists. Bless God, I am a Positivist. I'm positive God, for Christ's sake, has pardoned my sins, changed my heart, and made me a new creature." A delusion all this? Let us wait till the self-confident preachers of the "realities" of no God, no soul, and no immortality, can point to one such change, where Christians can point to tens of thousands in every generation.

But it is poor work for Christians merely to boast of what Christianity can do. Like Paul, we are compelled to speak thus when challenged. But there is a more excellent way. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* We would rather learn from our foes than fight them. We may learn from Mr. John Morley and Mr. Cotter Morison to be faithful to a high calling, such as men have never had but when it was given "of God in Christ Jesus." We may learn more thoroughly than ever to regard men as Christ did, to love them for His sake who came to seek and to save the lost, for their own sakes and for

the sake of what God in Christ can make them. We may learn once more that the highest function of all, that which God incarnate proved to be the highest and Himself illustrated, is to serve, not to rule; to help, not to lecture and dogmatise. We may learn, lastly, as all must sooner or later learn, that the only way effectively and adequately to serve men is to lead the way in serving God, their God and ours; to bring home to them the one truth which has power to raise and cleanse and save men here and hereafter, that God their Father loves them and in Christ has given Himself for them. To use the words of a poet who has seen to the heart of this central Christian truth—

> "The very God! Think, Abib: dost thou think?
> So the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
> So through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of mine,
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> And thou must love me who have died for thee!'"

Thus did Christ teach the true "service of man," and thus must Christians learn it at His feet.

IX.

PROBLEMS IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

THE history of the Christian Church has been divided into three periods—the Petrine, before the Reformation of the sixteenth century; the Pauline, covering the three centuries since the Reformation; and the Johannine, that on which we are just entering. And, it has been said, that as the Church needed a reformation to restore to her the full significance and force of St. Paul's teaching, so another reformation is needed to bring us nearer to the mind of St. John, evangelist and divine. The epigram, like most sayings of the kind, contains mingled truth and error. It is, however, possible to pass through a reformation without knowing it. And, in spite of the many obvious deficiencies and some crying evils in the Christian Church of our time, there are not wanting signs that the Church in our day is being led, though by a circuitous path, into a greater simplicity and depth of Christian thought and experience, a more intuitive perception of the glory of Christ, her Lord and Head, as well as a more complete practical likeness to Him in spirit and in life. So great is the disturbance and disquiet in some departments of theological thought, that to many it appears as if the very foundations of faith were quaking under their feet, while to others the very heaving of the waves on

which they essay to walk only shows the necessity of keeping the eye steadfastly fixed on Christ Himself, and drives the soul into deeper and more intimate communion with Him. While doing this, and striving more simply to obey and more closely to follow her Master, the Church may learn some of the deepest and most necessary lessons, even in the very midst of anxiety and unrest. There is a "shaking of the things that are made," in order that "those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

One excellent sign of the times is the increased attention given to Christian ethics. The very use of the word "ethics," rather than "morals," is significant. The Greek word reminds us that morals mean something deeper and more abiding than *mores*, "manners," and the associations of the nobler word lead us happily away from the point of view of the "moralists" of a hundred years ago. Man cannot live by bread alone, and there was little enough sustenance for the spirit in the "cauldrife" moralisings of the eighteenth century. But if the dominant note in former times was *behaviour*, one of the shallowest of words, that of to-day is *character*, one of the deepest. The Christian instinctively feels the radical importance of Christian character. One of the earliest names for the nascent Christian Church was ἡ ὁδός, "The Way,"[1] and while the Church in all ages has been the minister of truth and the home of worship, at least, in theory, it has never ceased to be the school of character. These have ever been the noblest and best periods of Christian history, in which this lofty practical function of the Church has been kept in the foreground.

[1] Acts ix. 2, xix. 9–23, R.V.

There are, however, several reasons of urgent importance why this aspect of Church life and duty should be especially insisted on to-day. We can only name three from among many, and can do little more than name them. (1) The prevalence of materialistic philosophy, occupied with the "positive" or physical side of life, which is rapidly doing much more than tinge and colour the current views of ethics. "The secularisation of morals is becoming imperative," urged Mr. Herbert Spencer in his *Data of Ethics*, and emphasis has been given to the thought in his new work on ethics only just published. We meet such an utterance by an emphatic, "The Christianisation of morals is more imperative than ever." The errors of Hedonism cannot be adequately combated from the point of view of the Intuitionalist school, and it is high time that the Christian philosopher made his voice more distinctly and more loudly heard. (2) The slow filtering down of such philosophy has infected the multitude, who know little, and care less, about philosophy, with ideas, the practical influence of which is visible in almost every part of our national life. The sense of personality has been weakened, and with it men's feelings of responsibility and views of sin. The feeble sentimentalising about evil which has taken the place of the more robust, if sometimes unduly harsh, views of earlier generations, is largely due to this cause. Evil is traced rather to outward conditions than to the exercise of individual will; excuse is made for it accordingly, and the remedies sought operate rather from without than from within. The generation needs a strong ethical tonic, and there is none available but that which Christianity supplies. (3) There is great need of the moralisation

of all the spheres of life. We require not so much the increase of ethical knowledge as the more complete application of what we have to all departments of our various life. It is quite possible, as the Bishop of Peterborough said at the Folkestone Church Congress, for a man to be perfectly moral in his family life, less so in his daily business life, only conventionally moral in his public life, while he is unable altogether to appreciate the application of morals to international affairs. These are only a few of the reasons which make the practical study of Christian ethics a crying need of our time. If we needed any other argument to drive home these considerations, it would be that there is no part of the work of the Church which produces so immediate, so striking, and so permanent an effect upon the irreligious multitude outside her pale, whom she hopes to win for Christ, as a cultivation of the Christian spirit, a manifestation of the Christian temper, and a vigorous application of Christian principle to the affairs of common life.

Such a volume as Dr. Newman Smyth's *Christian Ethics* will prove an excellent guide and help to those who are anxious to work out for themselves some of these problems. The marvel is that no such work had appeared before in this country. In Germany, books on Christian ethics abound. The history, the metaphysics, and the practical bearings of the subject have alike been copiously treated in the works of such writers as Luthardt, Gass, Rothe, Harless, Dorner, and Paulsen, not to speak of the Danish Martensen. In our own country, if we pass by the casuists of the seventeenth century and the moral philosophers of the eighteenth, we find hardly a treatise in our own age

which deals directly and specifically with Christian ethics. What is wanted is an adequate interpretation of the Christian consciousness, the moralisation of life from a distinctively Christian point of view. All the wider and more open, therefore, was the field before Dr. Newman Smyth for his work, and in many respects he has filled an undeniable gap with judgment, ability, and success.

The work is divided into two parts, which deal respectively with the Christian ideal and Christian duties. A thoughtful Introduction discusses a number of preliminary questions, such as the relation between Christian and philosophical ethics, the bearing of ethics upon theology and religion, together with certain theological and philosophical postulates necessary to the exposition of the subject. The first part begins with the revelation of Christian ideal, in the historical Christ, in Scripture, and through the Christian consciousness. The author then unfolds the contents of the Christian ideal or the biblical doctrine of the Supreme God, comparing the Christian ideal with others. The "Realisation of the Moral Ideal" includes a description of the various stages of moral development in history—the prehistoric stage, the legal stage, and the Christian era, while the remaining chapters of this part explain the Christian ideal of virtue, the methods by which it is progressively realised in a world of evil, and the various spheres in which it is exercised—the family, the State, and the Church. In Part II. an instructive chapter deals with the Christian conscience, and this is followed by an analysis of Christian duties—duties towards self as a moral end; duties towards others, including a discussion of social problems; and duties towards God;

while last of all comes a chapter, all too brief, on the "Christian Motive Power," without which the whole of the previous elaborate analysis would be null and naught.

As to the execution of the work, the arrangement of topics, as will be seen, is clear and methodical, and the relative proportion of space and attention allotted to each is fairly observed, though the important subjects of the latter chapters, our duty to God and the Christian Moral Dynamic, appear to have received scant justice, because of their place at the end. We cannot, however, avoid marking certain grave deficiencies. There are subjects of the first importance, not forgotten indeed by Dr. Smyth, but all too slightly dealt with in his exposition, among which we may name the distinctive Christian doctrine of Sin, the bearing of the Atonement upon the genesis and formation of the Christian character, and the doctrine of the Christian character and the doctrine of the New Birth, with an accompanying exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit. Also we have failed to find such an account as we might have expected of what may be called specifically Christian virtues, those which differentiate the Christian ethical system from all others, and among them Humility and Forgiveness. It would, perhaps, be ungracious to lay great stress upon these omissions from a volume which is already very full and comprehensive, but it will be seen that a fuller treatment of the topics we have mentioned—all possessing an inner kinship and mutual connection—would have given a richer and a deeper Christian colouring to a very ably drawn picture. Dr. Smyth's style is lucid and flowing, occasionally forcible and striking. If we miss some-

thing of what might be called ethical ardour and enthusiasm, and if the very evenness of the style causes the attention sometimes to flag, the reader cannot but be conscious that he is being easily and skilfully led by a guide who knows the country well, and whose object it is to make the road smooth and easy to travel. There is no display of resources, but the author is evidently a man who has read, and made the results of reading his own. We by no means always agree with him, but we have hardly found a single point where our judgment differs from his, on which we have not learned something from Dr. Smyth's way of putting his case.

At present we propose only to discuss a few of the many great questions raised in the course of this comprehensive investigation. These questions are evidently of two kinds, metaphysical and practical; if, indeed, we should not make a third class of questions more strictly theological. The theoretical questions arise concerning such points as these. First, as to the very foundation of the science of Christian ethics, its relation to philosophy on the one hand and religion on the other; the nature and authority of conscience, the relation between the natural and the Christian conscience, and the extent to which Christian ethics may proceed upon conclusions reached by spiritualistic philosophy; the law of Christian ethics, how far it is constant, how far variable, in what sense Christ, and in what sense the Scripture constitutes the norm for the Christian ideal; the methods by which the ideal is attained, the moral value of faith, and the possibility of constructing an ethical system in which faith and love figure so largely, yet it might seem so vaguely;

the true significance of Christian virtue, and the analysis and classification of duties which has been determined in so many different ways by different writers on the subject.

The number of practical questions that arise is legion, and these are likely to be more generally interesting. Without meddling with the unprofitable details of casuistry, the Christian moralist has a thousand questions thrust upon him which he finds it equally difficult to ignore and to answer. The relation between duties to self and duties to others, and man's duty to God in relation to both; the meaning of "a conflict of duties," and the mode of reaching a practical solution; the right of self-defence; the defensibility of suicide and euthanasia; the obligation of truthfulness, whether speaking the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is universally binding upon all men at all times, and if not, within what limits and conditions; the question of marriage and divorce; the relation between Church and State, in theory, if not in practice, together with the whole of that vast, far-reaching, deep-seated Social Problem, of which we hear so much and know so little; the nascent science of the Christian Economics and the formation of "industrial conscience." It is clear that the whole subject bristles with questions, and the mere enunciation of a few of them might leave the impression that the science consists of the statement of a series of problems, which may be propounded but can never be solved. This is, however, very far from being the case. The foundations of Christian ethics are abroad and deep and sure; the principles laid down are sufficient for practical guidance, and it is only by way of showing the living, practical interest

of the study that we have enumerated some of the questions, which in our own day are clamouring for an answer. In this essay we shall mainly occupy ourselves with the practical side of the subject, but may give a specimen or two of the way in which Dr. Smyth deals with its theological and metaphysical aspects.

Is Christian ethics an independent science? Yes, and no. Like philosophical ethics, it starts from facts, but, unlike philosophical ethics, it finds its facts in the *Christian* moral consciousness and its historical development. "It is the science," says Dr. Smyth, "of the moral contents, progress, and ends of human life under the formative Christian ideal" (p. 3). Christian ethics is "ethics raised to the highest power, the last and fullest interpretation of the world and its history." It therefore presupposes scientific ethics, but so far from being dependent on the science to which it owes a large amount of material, it also brings the ethics of the schools before its bar and judges them. Similarly, Christian ethics rests upon Christian doctrine, and is often represented as entirely dependent on the theology out of which it springs. Dr. Smyth, however, magnifies his office as a Christian moralist; and while he admits a certain "necessary and legitimate subordination and service of ethics to theology," he will not allow this to degenerate into servitude. The point is one of greater importance in its practical issues than might at first sight appear, Dr. Smyth making the significant remark, that we need an "ethical eschatology," clearly hinting that the Christian conscience is to form its own judgment on current doctrine concerning the last things. We extract, therefore, a few sentences, giving

the substance of a somewhat long paragraph, that the author may speak of himself:—

"Christian ethics must be allowed to follow closely, and should remain true to the ethical-religious consciousness, without prevention or prejudice from Christian dogmatics. Moreover, whatever postulates Christian ethics may borrow from Christian theology, it must bring these to its own moral tests and judgment. We cannot consent to lower the Christian conscience before any churchly tradition, or to yield for a moment the Christian sense of right to any supposed dogmatic interest. The question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is an ancient appeal directly to the religious conscience, which Christian ethics should always keep open and sacred . . . Old theology is always becoming new in the vitalising influence of ethics. The Church will not long refuse to bring any article of its faith to the test of its most Christlike sense of love and fairness. It is reason enough for doubting and for re-studying any traditional teaching, or received word of doctrine, if it be felt to harass or confuse the Christian conscience of an age. Nothing can abide as true in theology which does not prove its genuineness under the ever-renewed searching of the Christian moral sense; nothing is permanent fruit of the teaching of Christ which does not show itself to be morally Christlike . . . Christian ethics cannot consent to commit suicide in any supposed interest of theology."

There is important truth here; but it is, perhaps, too absolutely stated, and the passage presents only one side of the case. It is true that the truth as it is in Jesus commends itself alike to the sanctified reason and the enlightened conscience, that both faculties are to be intelligently and simultaneously used, and that the exercise of conscience may often furnish a salutary and much-needed check upon the exercise of the speculative reason. But it is true, also, that only the Christian conscience can thus judge; that it needs itself to be perpetually instructed and guided, and either restrained

or stimulated by Christian doctrine; and history has proved again and again the proneness of the conscience to err in certain directions when not sufficiently enlightened. Only the spiritual man "judgeth all things," and himself is judged of none; and the πνευματικός in London, as in Corinth, is all too rare. Christian ethics and Christian doctrine are naturally dependent: they must grow together, and the growth of each will be the steadier and truer for the presence of the other. It is thus that the Apostles teach. Whether it be a John or a Paul, different as they are in type and temperament, the Apostolic leaders of Christian thought give, each in his own way, a perfect example of the marriage of doctrine and practice: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

An important question, especially at the present time, concerns the relation of the Scriptures to the Christian conscience: how far, and in what sense, Scripture is to be considered the ethical norm, the rule of practice, as well as of faith. Dr. Newman Smyth is one of the leaders of the American school of divines who confer a perilously high prerogative on the Christian consciousness. Hence we scan with some carefulness his utterances on this point, and hesitate somewhat as we read:—

"The source of infallibility in a Scripture in the last analysis can be only Christ and the Spirit of the Christ; the degree and power of the authority of any inspired Scripture depends upon the closeness and certainty of its relation to the teaching and Spirit of Jesus. A Scripture becomes of doubtful canonicity the more the immediate Christian source and quality of it, either by critical studies or difficulties in its contents, is thrown into doubt or obscurity."

The passage as it stands is unexceptionable; but it raises the questions, who and what is the "Christ" here spoken of, how far is His teaching and spirit estimated as apart from Scripture, and with whom and under what limits rests the power of judging the various Scriptures by their "Christlike" character? "There cannot be two nominative authorities, the one Christian and the other Scriptural," says Dr. Smyth, and to this all must assent, if between these two there can be supposed to be conflict or discrepancy. But there can be no reason why Scripture should not be itself the rule, as unfolding to us the mind of Christ, the various contents of Scripture falling easily and naturally into place when Christ is viewed as the Lord and the Light of the whole Bible. The danger—as experience has shown, a practical and serious one—is lest men should constitute themselves judges of what is meant by the words "Christ" and "Christ-like," and, on some subjective principle like the arbitrary one of Luther, pick and choose among the writings of the New Testament, rejecting here a book and there a miracle, or an apostolic utterance, because, to the individual Christian consciousness, "Christ" does not sufficiently appear in it. It is only too easy for critics like Marcion to mutilate the Gospel they undertake to improve. But Dr. Smyth reassures us as to his meaning later on. He accepts the "Sacred Writings as a whole, and in the moral and spiritual teaching which issues from them" as "the authoritative outward rule of faith and practice." And in the following passage he puts with clearness and force his view of the relation between Scripture and the Christian consciousness:—

"The true relation between faith and the Bible is not to be found in a hasty answer, which subjects either one without qualification to the other. Rather, we hold that the two are harmoniously related, and that we are to endeavour to understand the just province and authority of each, and the unity in which the same Spirit works through both. If it has been the active error of Romanism to exalt the infallibility of the Spirit in the voice of the Church above the infallibility of the same Spirit in the Written Word, it has seemed to be the passive error of Protestantism, since the Reformation, to forget too much the interdependence of the written Scripture and the living witness of the Spirit in the mind of the Church. Yet the two testimonies of the Spirit are complementary, and the authority of the one requires the witness of the other. If we separate these two factors of the spiritual life of man, we can have no sufficient rule, and, consequently, no infallibility. Furthermore, neither of these two is of itself source of authority, but only means for the impartation and reception of supreme truth. There is but one original source of authority; it is the truth itself—the truth which came by Christ. There is only one final and supreme authority in Christianity, either for its theology or for its ethics—that is the Christ, the mind of Christ, the Spirit of Christ. The Holy Ghost is the final authority; the teaching of the Holy Spirit is the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

Few questions are more important at the present time than the relation between Scripture, the Church, and Faith, or Reason. The only abiding reconciliation between what have been considered by some to be rival and irreconcilable claims is to lay it down, that for the Christian the one infallible Authority is Christ, teaching, according to His promise, by the Holy Spirit: and as to the channels through which He speaks to us, to take for guide the inspired Scriptures, as afresh interpreted and applied by the enlightened consciousness of the living and "Spirit-bearing" Church. This canon by no means puts an end to all discussion,

but it appears to be no part of the Divine method in educating mankind to provide a supreme authority, which will end all discussion. Men in their ignorance and weakness long for such an authority, and, when none is forthcoming, are ever seeking to manufacture one for themselves. But God breaks up these human crutches, that His Church may learn to walk; to walk indeed by faith, but to use their own divinely given limbs, in dependence on Himself alone.

The section in which Dr. Newman Smyth discusses faith is, on the whole, excellent. We have already said that the subject of the Atonement and its bearing on Christian Ethics is by no means adequately treated in this volume. We are not quite sure what the author's views of the Atonement are. He speaks of "the world with Christ in it becoming a new world" now that "the Father is no man's enemy," it is to be "known henceforth as a redeemed world"; and, again, of "the *confession of sin* (the italics are ours), which has been made for man in the sufferings and death of Christ." Again, he tell us that "we are to claim our part in that divine forgiveness which has been received for humanity by the son of man," and that "inasmuch as we partake in our human nature of that humanity which exists in Christ always before God, we are in a Christian relation, we are under a gracious privilege which would not exist for us without Christ." But after carefully reading and re-reading the few paragraphs which deal with the subject, we find it not a little difficult to understand in what, according to Dr. Smyth, the redemption and reconciliation in Christ consists. The same criticism of course applies to the treatment of faith, in so far that the atonement of Christ as an object of faith, as well as

in its relation to the conscience, and, again, as a means of moral renewal, does not receive sufficient attention. But the analysis of faith itself, and the description given of it as a moral force, contains much that is admirable. Faith is described as a "principle of Christian appropriation" or of "moral personal receptivity," not yet by any means perfect, but itself the very vital principle of the Christian life, in which all that God provides in Christ for the soul's nourishment is received and assimilated, and which is capable of indefinite extension for growth in grace and in moral and spiritual excellence. The following passage will remind many of a similar strain, in Hare's "Victory of Faith":—

"Faith, the peculiar principle of moral appropriation in the Christian dispensation, is seen to be, in its simple and vital sort, a personal trust. It consists in receiving the influence and power of a person, even the Christ. But this original personal trust proves to be a fruitful moral relation. It is new-creative of character. It reforms the conduct of life. It opens the understanding to truth. It quickens the spiritual imagination. It lends earnestness to the reason. It contains the peace of justification. It brings the life into the freedom of the law of the Spirit. Faith in its increasing power gives to men spiritual mastery over their passions. It enlightens, justifies, makes righteous. It opens the free course to love, and possesses the cheerful expectation of the new heavens and the new earth. In one word, the Christian faith becomes within the soul the new-creative principle of the Christian personality."

We cannot follow Dr. Newman Smyth into his justification of the place in human nature rightly claimed for the faith-principle, what he calls its "psychological validity," or through the still more interesting section on the distinctively Christian use of faith. But by no means the least valuable part of

this exposition is the explanation given of the relation between faith and love. Here the ethical insight which the author possesses is seen at its best. Here, in the personal relation established between Christ and the soul, the foundation is laid of a new and better obedience. In Apostolic phrase, "Faith works by love." The transition is thus effected. "In this new, personal relationship to Christ, the weight which prevented the up-springing of true, free life, is removed from man's heart, and at once the new power is imparted which is able to raise up the new, fruitful life. The stone once taken away, the moral nature, responsive to the warmth of the divine love, can break through its earthly corruption, and spring up and grow to strong rich moral life and fruitfulness." Thus is solved the great question concerning Christian virtue: Is there a double principle of virtue in the Christian life, faith, and love, and, if these are united, how and by what bond of relationship are they joined together? Dr. Smyth answers—

"In ethics we may say that love is the material, and faith the formal principle of Christian virtue. The Christian character is formed by faith, it lives in love. It is constituted what it is through faith, but it consists in love. Or, we might say, love, which is the essential Christian character, in its receptive and formative principle, is trust; and faith, which is constitutive of Christian character, in its positive and active power becomes love. Faith passes into love, which abides. And love remains love only as it always trusts. The two belong together, therefore, as condition and completion of the same virtue; as the formal cause and material principle of the same character. Faith is the finiteness, the dependence of love. Love is the independence, the infiniteness of faith."

The analysis of love itself is finely suggestive. Love

implies self-affirmation, self-impartation, and self-existence in others. The first of these is often forgotten. Dr. Smyth shows that this initial stage is necessary to those which are more characteristic of love's exercise. Love "affirms its own worthiness, imparts to others its good, and finds its life again in the well-being of others." The application of those thoughts to the Divine Love is as full of instruction in theology, as the working out of them in Christian life is fruitful for ethics.

But we must hasten on to the more practical aspects of this comprehensive theme. One of the earliest questions asked by those who are interested in the better sort of casuistry is, What is to be done in the case of a conflict of duties? One of the first lessons to be learned by a Christian who would rightly educate his conscience, is how to act in the case of such a conflict, real or apparent. On this subject we are in hearty agreement with Dr. Newman Smyth. There is no real conflict of duties. Moral perplexity is abundantly common, a conflict of moral claims recurs every day, perhaps many times a day, but Duty is One and indivisible. It is the very meaning of our training in the school of life that we should learn to make our choice as wisely, as promptly, and as peacefully—with as little distraction and suspense of mind—as we may. The claims of public and private life, the need of self-culture and the obligation to help and benefit others, the claims of the family, the Church, society, and the world outside,—these are but representative of rival claimants upon our time and interest, the relative proportion of whose legitimate demands it is often exceedingly difficult to estimate. But there is a hierarchy

of duties, and the principles of life laid down by the Master are sufficient to enable His followers to part and arrange their ranks and orders. It is, indeed, not a question of principle, but of practice. What is needed is the finer discrimination, only to be obtained as love abounds more and more in "knowledge and all discernment" (ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει, Phil. i. 9), the spiritual tact which of itself constitutes another and more delicate moral sense that can solve these difficulties for us. "Duty is unity of heart. It is the harmony of will with opportunity." It brings peace, not a sword. The earlier stages of the action of conscience may bring disquiet, anxiety, alarm. It drives us, as Amiel says, "into contact with the terrible wheels within wheels of human suffering and responsibility; it is the bugle-call, the cock-crow, which puts phantoms to flight; it is the armed archangel who chases men from an artificial Paradise."[1] But that is only the beginning of its work. It may, it is true, drive a man into the desert, but it will not leave him there. And the emancipated and enlightened Christian conscience leads into a real Paradise a peace which has none of the seductive ease of an Armida's garden, but the triumphant calm of one who sees his way to victory through the bitterest and most perplexing moral conflicts. Dr. Smyth very appropriately cites the example of our Lord, in whose life there was no collision of duties, though no man ever lived among more complex and conflicting claims. "It is impossible to conceive a life busied with more varied tasks, called by more incessant demands upon its energies, and occupied with vaster problems, present, future, eternal—all to be met

[1] *Journal Intime* (translated by Mr. Ward), p. 199.

and answered in three short years of earthly opportunity —yet in that brief life, into which time and eternity poured their tremendous issues, the really wonderful thing is that there was no indecision, no note of inward perplexity, no doubt concerning the will of God immediately to be done, no mistake as to when His hour was come." Deep and wide is the gulf which separates us from Him; startling is the contrast between His calm, perfect life, and our troubled and distracted hours; but is it not one of the earliest practical problems in Christian ethics, how to bridge that gulf over which he graciously stretches to meet us more than half-way; and would not a little more inward fidelity, a little more earnest prayer, a little more strict self-discipline, and that "much more" of the gift of the Spirit which is to be had for the asking, make the Christian disciple in this respect more like his Master?

One of the advantages to the Christian minister of the study of a systematic treatise, like the one before us, is that aspects of duty are brought before him, which otherwise he might be likely to forget or to misunderstand. How difficult it is, for example, to form a just estimate of our duties to ourselves. It is easy to be selfish; it is almost as easy to some persons to rush to the opposite extreme of excessive asceticism and self-denial; but to realise in practice the "reasonable self-love" of which Butler speaks, and which is certainly recognised in the New Testament, is another matter. Dr. Newman Smyth begins his study of duties by describing those "towards self as a moral end." We doubt the wisdom of beginning with these. Our Lord gave us a different and a better order, when from the Old Testament He selected a "first and great command-

ment," and added, in the next place, a "second, which is like unto it." In this volume our duties to ourselves are treated first, and occupy nearly fifty pages; our duties towards others next, occupying a hundred more; while duty towards God is crowded into ten at the close of the book. Still, following Dr. Smyth's order, it is certain that the second great commandment recognises love of self as well as love of our neighbour, while the whole Scripture teems with instruction as to the true nature of our duty to ourselves. "A human personality is a sacred trust of being. Every man holds himself in trust from his Creator." It is this view of self as a moral end which makes proper self-regard a duty, and distinguishes it easily and completely from selfishness, which is "its counterfeit and degradation." Dr. Smyth points out how this proper self-regard will preserve true Christians from self-destructive asceticism, from narrow and one-sided ideas of self-culture; how it comprises the obligation of self-defence and self-protection; how it embraces all those virtues that are conducive to vigorous life, making all our habits and surroundings as wholesome as possible, physically, intellectually, and morally; and, further, how it should control the Christian's whole thought of death. Here is evidently a wide field for the Christian moralist, some of it almost untrodden ground.

We leave it, however, unexamined, in order to show how Dr. Smyth approaches such a practical question as the defensibility or indefensibility of suicide. It is one of those touch-stones by which the practical working of rival ethical systems may be tested. Instinct decides against it, but is the instinct justifiable? How is it possible to meet the arguments by which philosophers

have defended what the simple-minded man unhesitatingly condemns? So with the question of "euthanasia." Is it permissible for a helpless sufferer, who is enduring physical agony without the slightest hope of recovery or relief, to shorten, by the use of a merciful anæsthetic, pain which is even more distressing for others to witness than it is for the sufferer to bear? Dr. Smyth, as a Christian moralist, deals very finely and conclusively with these sophistries. "A man's life, in all its power and faculties, is a personal trust from his God. It is our trust-fund of being, not our absolute property. We have no right to spend or to scatter a trust-fund at our pleasure. Moreover, to the Christian conscience, human life, in all its constitutive elements and powers, has been redeemed in Christ, and each life is to pass in this world through His redemptive processes until, as far as possible on earth, its full salvation shall be accomplished." We must not "play truant from God's school." He alone knows when life's lesson is learned, and the best means—often strange enough in our eyes—by which that lesson can be fully taught to His wayward children. Further, "each life belongs to others' lives. To live is not only an individual duty; it is a social obligation." Even in those rare cases where self-destruction seems to be the only way of escape from moral pollution, *suicide* can hardly be said to be justifiable, the act of self-destruction changes its character into one of "necessary self-defence." As to the question of euthanasia, "the general ethical rule is that life is to be fought for by all the resources of science until the end." Medical science is strangely ignorant even now concerning the probabilities of life or death, and it has no right to interfere in any way that would cause

death. "A quieting balm may be given, but not a deadly potion; positive interference in favour of death, with another's life, would be an interference which, even though suggested by benevolence, no man has authority to render, and which is also contrary to general considerations of utility. The sacredness of life, and God's responsibility for it, forbid the assumption of any medical lordship over it." Considerations of utility are here introduced into the argument in an entirely subordinate way, but it is tolerably clear that Utilitarianism, even in its highest and purest form, would not find it easy to refuse the "quietus" which a hopeless sufferer earnestly desires, as much for his friends' sake as for his own. Only the light which comes from the revelation of a personal God, of Christ, Lord of life and death, and from the life and immortality brought to light through the gospel, is sufficient to show clearly where the path of duty lies amidst this dark valley of the shadow of death.

Another of the constantly recurring practical questions of Christian casuistry concerns our duty to others rather than to ourselves. Wherein lies the obligation to speak at all times the exact truth? Has it any limits, and, if so, how can these be defined without prejudice to the performance of one of the most sacred and most elementary of duties? Are there any limitations to the obligation of veracity? We have said that our duty in this matter is mainly to others; as St. Paul puts it: "Speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another." But it is clear that veracity is a duty a man owes to himself. It is like the duty of personal cleanliness, which is binding on every one, for his own sake as well as for

that of others. Truth is the girdle which binds about the loins, keeping all garments in place, and bracing up the body for exercise and service. "Truthfulness," says Dr. Smyth, "is the self-consistency of character; falsehood is a breaking up of moral integrity. Inward truthfulness is essential to moral growth and personal vigour, as it is necessary to the live oak that it should be of one fibre and grain from root to branch." Even the common and apparently trifling fault of affectation is corrupting. "Let the habit of untruthfulness in little social things, and daily affectations of manners, continue, and a wholly unnatural type of character, eaten out with insincerities, may be the result." But none will question the absolute necessity of truthfulness, within and without, as a duty towards self and towards others, and as, perhaps, the first requisite of morality, though many in an age like ours, of varnish and veneer, may fail to see how easily truthfulness may be undermined by the "seeming genial, venial fault," which society condones, or even inculcates. There is a ready response in the unsophisticated conscience to the vigorous homilies of Ruskin on this point. "Do not let us lie at all. Do not think of one falsity as harmless, and another as slight, and another as unintended. Cast them all aside: they may be light and accidental, but they are an ugly soot from the smoke of the pit, for all that; and it is better that our hearts should be swept clean of them, without over-care as to which is largest or blackest."[1]

Still we are pressed with the question, Are there no fictions of politeness, no falsehoods of necessity? Dr. Newman Smyth seems disposed to allow some

[1] *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, ch. ii. sec. 1.

place to the former. Untruth may be hidden under the current phrases of polite conversation; so far as this is the case, such forms of speech are reprehensible. "Ordinarily, however, like paper money, though worthless in themselves, they have value in the general social credit and responsibility which they represent. So far as such phrases are convenient, as the small change of social intercourse, which, were it necessary, might be redeemed in the real service and helpfulness for which these light passing words of politeness stand, they cannot be regarded as counterfeits of the inward truth of human hearts. Much polite manners and speech is a praiseworthy, though often too heartless, endeavour to carry out in society the golden rule. And the practice with sincere intention of these forms of golden speech may prove a refinement of spirit as well as of the manners." The emphatic words here for the moralist and the preacher are "with sincere intention." This it is which distinguishes true politeness from false, as it marks out the delicate but very clear line which separates truthfulness from untruthfulness in the use of kindly, courteous forms of speech.

Are there any "necessary lies"? It is better to face a question of this sort outright, and if a failure to tell the whole truth, or anything but the truth, is at any time morally justifiable, to declare it and to be able to tell the reason why. Conscience must not be tampered with. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." There is a moral instinct in man which excuses falsehood under extreme and special circumstances; it is well to know whether this is justifiable, or whether the plea of necessity is a mere cloak to cover what must be con-

sidered in itself wrong. We quite agree with Dr. Smyth, that all justifiable exceptions to general moral rules should themselves proceed from fixed moral principles. Nothing is so harmful in moral, and in civil or family government, as the notion that rules are elastic and may be stretched this way or that upon occasion. If one rule is set aside, it must be by the action of that which is seen to be a higher and more imperative commandment. Then the moral sense is not injured, for between the laws themselves there is no collision, only that under certain circumstances a moral obligation of a higher type suspends the working of one which, in its own sphere, is paramount. Let Dr. Newman Smyth speak for himself at this point:—

"The rule for all these cases of conscience may be stated thus: Speaking the truth is an obligation which we owe to all other rational creatures; it is a social duty; but evidently it cannot be owed whenever, from the nature of the case, no claims can be made upon us for the truth. Neither is it owed when it is perfectly clear that those claims have been morally forfeited, or temporarily lost. But this forfeiture of claims upon our truthfulness needs to be determined with sound ethical judgment, and not at our convenience, or by our supposed self-interest. The law is: we are under obligation to give the truth, and no falsehood, to all who have claims to know the truth from us. . . . . Do any men, or men under any special circumstances, lose that social right, and cease to have immediate claims upon others for the truth? This is the moral core of the question."

The cases in which such forfeiture has clearly taken place, are such as these. Disease may have made a fellow-creature insane, delirious, or too weak to receive the truth which otherwise would be his due, or he may have "dehumanised himself" by a criminal intent, or, possibly—here authorities may differ—in war it may

be held that the claims of an enemy to be told the truth are for the time in abeyance. Dr. Smyth at least takes this position, saying, "It would be absurd to say that it is right to kill an enemy, but not right to deceive him." Few consciences would be injured by a defence of the woman, alone in her house, who frightens away a criminal tramp by calling as if to her husband in the next room. And the physician, or the nurse in charge of the sick, may find from time to time a concealment of the truth to be not only kind, but necessary. Nevertheless, even in these cases, to tell the truth may prove to be the wiser as well as the kinder course, and a little care and skill will frame an answer which will neither injure a patient through bluntness nor violate the truth through mistaken kindness. We come back once more to apostolic teaching, and shall do well if we can combine St. Paul's *ἀληθένειν ἐν ἀγάπῃ*, "truthing it in love," with St. John's *ἀγαπᾷν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ*, "loving in truth."

Space will not admit of our dealing with the social problems raised in connection with Christian ethics. It is an excellent sign of the times that hardly any ecclesiastical gathering of any importance is held at which social questions do not occupy a somewhat prominent place. The Church Congress vies with the Congregational Union in claiming for the Christian Church a voice in industrial problems. Nothing but good can come of this so long as the Church—which in this case, for the most part, means the clergy—will keep to its proper task of investigating and laying down the *principles* which should regulate social economics, leaving the application of them to the individual or the social conscience. The Christian

minister does much more harm than good by meddling in matters which he only half understands. Besides the actual mischief of interference, he imperils that higher influence which it should be his constant aim to preserve and wisely to use. This does not mean that a Christian teacher should not endeavour thoroughly to acquaint himself with the facts which constitute the social problem, or that he is not often among the best and wisest, as he may be amongst the most foolish and impracticable, of counsellors in commercial matters. It means that the Christian minister is chiefly concerned with Christian principles and the inculcation of a Christian spirit by example as well as by precept. To understand the way in which these principles bear upon the present condition of society needs much careful study; it needs indeed more practical knowledge, sounder judgment, and more leisure time than most ministers of religion can command.

They will find, however, much help of the right kind in the treatise before us. Dr. Smyth happily has no "fads" or crotchets; he is fairly free from class prejudices; he can sympathise with the needs of his fellow-creatures without writing nonsense about the People with a capital P. He points out evils calmly, not hysterically. Some of these are: the "impersonality or anonymousness" of modern industrial life; the tendency of society to gather round two opposite poles, of capital and labour; the human waste under the present industrial system; and "tendency to form three permanent monopolies—the monopoly of land, of capital, and of place; and, of the three evils, the latter would be felt by many as the worst class grievance." As to the remedy, he says:—

"In view of these signs and tendencies, we may reach the following general conclusion concerning the nature of our social problem; the evils which we have noticed accompany the rapid differentiation of the complex elements and functions of modern life; our social need, consequently, is a further and better integration of these factors. The vast and rapid industrial development of our age threatens social disintegration; what the age demands is some larger and happier social integration. In this new wholeness and soundness of society all the differentiations which have been historically developed are not to be destroyed, but fulfilled. Our social problem is to work out the next needed social integration."

Not that the new "integration" proposed by Socialism is by any means to be commended. Apart from its impracticability, the desirability of the programme proposed by the Collectivism of our day is more than doubtful. Dr. Newman Smyth values Socialism chiefly as a needed criticism of the existing state of things, and he gives a number of hints, some of which are new as well as valuable, that may prove very serviceable to ministers desirous of thinking out for themselves an answer to the question—What solution of the existing social problem is furnished by Christianity? Or, using the words with all possible reverence, What would the Lord Jesus Christ say upon the subject, if He were amongst us? He would not make Himself a "judge or a divider" over classes or individuals, but he would lay down principles which would go to the heart of the most complex social difficulties. Has He not already laid down such principles? It is for the ministers of His Church to give the answer. Let us take, however, from Dr. Newman Smyth one illustration—what he calls the "Christian ethical principle or distribution," which is stated in the abstract as follows: "To each according to his power of production and capacity of

appropriating the good of being, in harmony with the same law for all." Or, in words the scope of which may be more readily apprehended :—

"Christian ethics may insist, as a regulative principle, that one's share in the profits should bear a direct ratio to his social utility. A large share in the products of industry imposes a large social responsibility. The ratio of a man's productive obligation and social responsibility increases in direct proportion with his means. Social justice requires that this direct proportion be maintained between the individual's social utility and his share of the profits of civilisation. A clear and intense perception of this ethical principle of the possession of property is one of the marked characteristics of the public conviction at the present time of the responsibilities of wealth. Bishop Butler once said that he should be ashamed of himself should he die with £10,000. The great public are becoming more and more impatient of the man who has accumulated millions and spent little or nothing for the good of the people. Great wealth is to be estimated as an honour or a reproach, according to the Christian law of productive use and human service."

Let us suppose that this wholesome doctrine were, as with one consent, proclaimed from Christian pulpits and practised with fair unanimity by all Christian merchants and men of wealth amongst us? Would not even an approach to a realisation of this practical "Gospel of Wealth" go far to revolutionise the Christian Church? The influence of such an example would be no less potent for good among capitalists than amongst the representatives of labour, and one hardly knows whether greater results would be achieved by the redistribution of wealth thus effected or by the moral influence of such practical Christianity. But the Christian minister who is faithful enough to announce the duties of property must be equally prepared to maintain its legitimate claims, and have the moral

courage to insist upon the duties as well as the rights of labour. Dr. Newman Smyth may perhaps be thought to be over-sanguine in the picture that he draws of the modern Church "organising all Christian humanities and philanthropies in its own spiritual power," becoming "the strong and firm centre around which different industrial groups may be gathered and harmonised," itself "a permanent as well as powerful force of true social development." But it is one great business of ethics to aid in the realisation of high ideals by a clear and vigorous representation of their excellence. Christians should be the very last to complain of the picturing of ideals which seem too fair and too lofty to be realised. The method of our Lord and Master was not to despair of the lowest, but to bring the very highest within their vision and reach. And it is only in times of unbelief and spiritual decadence that the Christian Church will allow itself to be baffled or disheartened in its glorious task of purifying and Christianising the whole life of the whole world.

An inspiring picture lies before the Christian Church of the work she is called to do in the department of practical ethics, if she is but faithful to her calling and to her Living Head. The vision of "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing," will be fully realised only at the last. But, before that time comes, the spectacle may be seen of a Church by no means herself without blemish, yet labouring with might and main to purify every part of the life of the world in the midst of which her lot has been cast. And He who Himself shrank from no effort, from no humiliation, in order to seek and to save that which was lost, has taught us that it is in the midst of such arduous, self-

denying toil His followers draw nearest to the personal holiness they seek, and best prepare for the reward of His presence and smile. "There will come a time," said Hooker, "when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive more reward than three thousand volumes of Divinity written with a disdainful sharpness of wit." Christian doctrine has its crown, its aureole of glory; but only a few can win it. The glory of the Christian doctor is surpassed by that of the Christian saint. "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is Love."

X.

THE REALISATION OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

THE close of the nineteenth century has been marked by a desire, very variously manifested, to remove, or at least very greatly to diminish, the existing divisions of Christendom. It is something that the fact of these divisions should be so generally regretted, and the evil they occasion so universally acknowledged. Time was, when Catholic and Protestant, Calvinist and Arminian, were content to fight, and cared only for victory. The opponent in a controversy was an enemy, and the end of conflict was not his reconciliation but his overthrow. Now, happily, throughout a large part of Christendom, a desire for mutual understanding has arisen, which may or may not lead to mutual agreement. A campaign has given place to diplomatic negotiation; *cedunt arma togæ.* Many causes have combined to bring this about, more than we can briefly describe. The scientific study of history has exploded many ancient fallacies and fond delusions. The more complete acquaintance with one another which representatives of various communities have gained has tended to remove prejudice and misunderstanding. Theological controversy has lost much of its asperity, cynics would say, in proportion as men have lost living interest in theological tenets. The adver-

saries of Christianity and of religion itself have compelled Christians to draw nearer to one another and ask themselves whether a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, who held different views upon baptism or the temporal power of the Pope, was not to be preferred to one who refused allegiance to God under any form of thought. Reunion conferences of all descriptions have accordingly been held, and friendly deputations have been entertained. Some of these have been public; others—not the least important—have been informal and quite private. Not very much has as yet resulted from these efforts. A few Nonconformist communities have drawn nearer to one another, councils and federations of Free Churches have been formed, various branches of Methodism have united in some of the colonies, and some approach has been made towards Presbyterian reunion at home. But, for the most part, high contracting parties have not gone beyond the stage of friendly overtures. It does not, therefore, follow that these efforts have been in vain. On the other hand, it may perhaps be said with truth that, in spite of the multiplication of Christian sects without, and the equally serious divergence of Christian parties within, the Churches of Christ in this country are nearer to one another in spirit and in aim than they have been at any time since the Reformation.

But no advance worth speaking of can be made along a road that leads nowhere, or by men who have no clear idea of the goal they desire to reach. Platform rhetoric about the advantages of Christian unity is very cheap and very useless. It is easy to quote the sacred words of our Lord's mediatorial prayer, "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee,

that they also may be one in us"; it is not so easy to expound their meaning and their bearing upon the actual condition of Christendom. That the goal which every Christian should seek to reach is ἑνότης, the "unity" of Eph. iv. 13, is readily enough conceded, the difficulty is to know by what path of ἕνωσις, or union, such a consummation is to be reached. Unity is a good in itself, an end, an ideal: union is a means, not necessarily good in itself, but valuable only in proportion as it promotes the end. There may be unity without union and union without unity. And the nature of the end determines the nature of the means. A clear and definite idea of unity would remove many of the differences of opinion which are held concerning the desirability of reunion and the modes by which it should be effected. What is the ideal of Christian unity which animates and directs the efforts which are being made after reunion? We are inclined to think that the minds of many excellent Christians are very hazy on this subject. There is one conception of a United Christendom, it is true, which is as definite as it is splendid—and impossible. In the Middle Ages, under Hildebrand, that ideal was well nigh realised. Religion then was one and indivisible. It was identified with the Catholic Church, which was one and indivisible also; a mighty institution, supreme over princes and potentates, as over all their subjects of various countries and races; a system which embraced and ordered every detail of the life of every individual from the cradle to the grave; which was supernatural in its origin, in its gifts, in its powers, and in its sanctions; which inspired philosophy, directed policy, and determined ethics; which provided a discipline for

every man, extending to his thoughts and desires as well as to his words and actions; which took charge of him, body, mind, and spirit in this life, and provided for him an entrance into life everlasting; and which, by its marvellous plastic power, welded the various elements of nationality, rank, education, and race brought under its sway, into one compact and apparently indissoluble whole. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for one glorious moment, it appeared to many as if the ideal of Christian unity had not only been conceived but attained.

The hope was fascinating, but it was a dream. It was worse than a mere dream which vanishes with the light of day, for the false idea of Christian unity which characterised mediæval Catholicism remains still the one hope of millions of misguided Christians, and haunts the path and dazzles and confuses the vision of many who ought to be wise enough to know it for a phantom. But if the conception of uniting all the Christian communities of the world into one organic whole, under the sovereignty of a single head who is vicar of Christ upon earth, by means of a highly elaborated organisation, which shall secure uniformity of doctrine, of discipline, and, to a large extent, of worship, be not only an impracticable, but a delusive and mischievous, dream, what substitute for it is proposed? The Romanist ideal is at least intelligible, to many minds it is the only intelligible, the only conceivable method of realising true Christian unity upon earth. The notion of such visible, palpable union in one compact organisation is essentially human, one which men, being what they are, were certain to entertain, just as the Jews, being what they were, were certain to entertain expectations

of a material Messianic kingdom. Such an outward unification of Christendom possesses irresistible attractions for a certain class of minds, and to many seems the only end worth striving for. Many, who have no sympathy with Papal pretensions, cherish, nevertheless, an ideal which is but slightly removed from that of the Middle Ages; for them the Reformation of the sixteenth century was little short of a catastrophe, and a restoration of "Catholic" continuity and inter-communion is the only meaning they can attach to the phrase "reunion of Churches."

For others, the problem is by no means so simple. They see plainly enough that the mediæval theory of ecclesiastical uniformity has disappeared, never to return. In their eyes, it is as undesirable as it is impossible. It could not now be realised without putting back the shadow many degrees upon the dial; and if it were realised to-morrow, it would prove but a "mockery king of snow" to the loyal hearts who expected to find in such a city of God upon earth the oneness of Christian feeling and purpose they so eagerly desire to see. But it does not follow that those who reject the so-called Catholic ideal are satisfied with the actual condition of Christendom. No true Christian, we imagine, can affect to be satisfied with it; every true Christian should be striving, so far as in him lies, to improve it. But how? Those who believe in the unity of the Spirit have a far harder task before them than the devout Roman Catholic who is sure that the only solution of the difficulty lies in a general submission to the Pope. It is hard to form a clear and definite ideal, it is still harder to know how to promote its realisation. For the mere sectarian, again, all is easy.

He labours for the welfare of his own infinitesimal fraction of the Christian whole as if—perhaps he himself believes it—"the Lord had no people outside of Arran." But, on the one hand, to preserve the lofty spiritual conception of Christian unity which characterises the New Testament, and, on the other, to deal with men as they are, to learn the lessons of history and propound principles and methods of a thoroughly practical kind which shall bring together the various and apparently incompatible elements of which modern Christendom is composed, not by drilling them into an external uniformity, but preserving essential unity amidst acknowledged diversity—*hic labor, hoc opus est.* The problem is how to secure unity without sacrificing freedom; how to maintain all that is worth maintaining in the very various types of Christian teaching, organisation, and worship, yet break down the barriers which effectually shut good men out from one another, and which hinder the progress of the kingdom of Christ at home and abroad.

It may be instructive if we begin our examination of the subject by a reference to the latest illustration of reunion projects, its course and issue. All the world knows that a Papal Commission has been examining into the "validity of Anglican orders," and that Pope Leo XIII., in his Bull *Apostolicæ Curæ,* has pronounced in the most definite and strongest terms that "ordinations carried out according to Anglican rite have been and are absolutely null and utterly void." Since the decision, Anglicans have been strenuously denying that they in any way sought for a judgment upon the point —it is no concern of theirs what the Pope may say either way. Of course, the Church of England did not

and could not formally invite a judgment; but it seems tolerably clear, from what Mr. Gladstone and Lord Halifax have said, that some High Churchmen thought they had good reason to believe that if the question were reopened a favourable judgment might be obtained, and took steps to obtain it. Historical theologians of the Romish Church, such as Abbé Duchesne and Abbé Portal, were known to favour the validity, and some sanguine spirits entertained high hopes that on this side a *rapprochement* between two branches of the "Catholic" Church might be effected. Father Puller and Rev. T. A. Lacey attended in Rome to present the Anglican "case," and till the result was published the incident was freely referred to as of good augury for the Church of England. The decision of the Pope has changed all this. He has not only—as surely everyone who knows anything about the Roman Curia might have expected—confirmed the decisions of previous Popes; he has gone out of his way to strengthen them and prevent the question from ever being reopened. So far as the relations between these two branches of the Church of Christ are concerned, the breach has been indefinitely widened and deepened.

What were the grounds of the decision arrived at and why has the incident the importance which has been attached to it on both sides? The Pope, as instructed by his advisers, rests his conclusions upon the fact that in the Edwardine Ordinal for the consecration of bishops there was a defect of *form*, in the absence of all mention of the Priesthood and the authority to offer up the Eucharistic Sacrifice; and a defect of *intention*, that is to say, of a definite purpose in the rite to convey the grace and power of priesthood, in this particular sense

of the term. The Anglican replies, that such a judgment virtually concedes a number of points which have hitherto been disputed, the due consecration of Barlow and of Archbishop Parker, and the preservation of continuity therein implied; while it rests a refusal to recognise the validity of orders in the Anglican Church upon grounds which would invalidate the formulæ in use in the Church Catholic for a thousand years. It is indignantly denied by every Anglo-Catholic that the "sacrificing priesthood" has ever been given up by the Church of England, and they assert that the right to "say Mass" for the benefit of the dead as well as the living, to insist upon confession and pronounce absolution, has always been a privilege of the Anglican "priest," though it may not always have been claimed. In other words, as Hurrell Froude said, at the beginning of the Tractarian movement, there is nothing for which the Roman Catholic Church should be abused, except for excommunicating Anglicans as schismatics and heretics. Such excommunication has, however, again been pronounced more sternly than ever, and the only method by which Anglican reunion with Rome can be effected is by acknowledgment of error and of the sin of schism and humble submission to the authority of the Pope.

There would have been no need to dwell so fully upon this incident, but for the moral it carries with it. The marvel to our minds is that men of such experience as Lord Halifax and Mr. Gladstone could ever have expected anything else. It did not need the remarkable memoir drawn up by Dom Gasquet and Canon Moyes, showing how inexpedient in this country would be any admission on the part of the Pope of the validity of

Anglican orders. Such an admission would be suicidal, so long as the theory of the Church accepted at Rome remains what it is. The only kind of "reunion" Rome can consistently recognise implies submission to the One Head of the One Church of Christ upon earth. Anglicans resent this assumption, naturally enough. Lord Halifax made a pathetic appeal, in his speech at the English Church Union meeting at the Church Congress, in words which will well bear repeating:—

> "When we are told that all men combine in the assertion that our sacraments are shams and our absolutions worthless, we reply, with St. Paul, that we know in Whom we have believed, and that we are content to trust our souls to Him, in life, in death, and to that great day when before all the world the truth will be vindicated. . . . To assert such things is to make Him who is the truth itself the accomplice of a lie. No; I say it advisedly, I would willingly die, if God give me the grace, rather than seem to impute such treachery to God, or imply by any act of mine that all I have known of my Lord's love and goodness to me was a snare and a sham."

Precisely; all honour to the man who makes such an earnest and strenuous protest. But Lord Halifax, and the members of the English Church Union, will observe that there are others besides themselves who are unwilling to "impute treachery to God," or imply by any act of theirs that what they have known of their Lord's love has been a snare and a sham. When Lord Halifax and his friends declare that the "orders" of ministers not episcopally ordained are absolutely null and void, tens of thousands of forgiven and renewed Christians in this country echo his own words, and say that they know in whom they have believed, and are content to abide the judgment of a day that is coming, when

another test of "validity" than that which commends itself to mediæval ecclesiastics will be applied to the whole subject of ministerial service and true membership in the body of Christ. In other words, the whole incident is an illustration of the way in which Christian unity is *not* to be secured; never, so long as the world lasts. The attempt to bind men by the cords of external ecclesiastical uniformity has been made; it has egregiously failed, and history might have taught those, who have not been content to learn it from the New Testament, that never by the observance of outward form and order, by the acceptance of any specific organisation, Papal or Episcopal, can anything deserving the name of Christian unity be acquired or maintained. The Anglican who is sore and indignant at the Papal rebuff, has an opportunity of learning how the application of a similar method of securing ecclesiastical unity is likely to fare at the hands of non-episcopal communities in this country, and America, and the Colonies. His own Church is considerably outnumbered by the adherents of such communities in English-speaking countries, yet he expects them meekly to receive the maxim, *ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*, and to acquiesce in the arrogant judgment, which would deny the position of ministers to men who have received the seal of their Apostleship as St. Paul himself received it, who wrote to his converts, "the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord."

The first requisite for the attainment of true Christian unity is the relinquishment of all tests of Christian membership and Christian ministry, except such as can be established from the New Testament. Romanists do not accept this canon, being proud of the "develop-

ment" which has culminated in the declaration of the infallibility of the Pope. All that true Evangelicals can do in such a case is to labour and to wait till Christ is Lord in His own Church, and the standards which He and His apostles have set up are accepted as valid and final. The Church of Rome is the greatest schismatic in the world, if that Scriptural definition of schism be accepted which means the producing of a rent in the body of Christ. Every Church which excludes from Christian communion those whom Christ and His apostles have not excluded, is in a state of schism, did they even number nine-tenths of all the Christians on the face of the earth. No principle of ecclesiastical unity can abide which violates this primitive and fundamental canon.

The modern Anglican would go with us as far as this. Canon Mason, in a recent volume,[1] furnishes an excellent example of a High Churchman who makes moderate demands and uses reasonable arguments. In objecting to the claims of the Church of Rome, he takes up exactly the position just described :—

"We are bound to believe what Christ and His apostles teach us. We must endeavour to be intelligent in following out their teaching to its issues. But we must be pardoned if we decline to accept as the conditions of unity a series of definitions which do not appear even in germ to be contained in the apostolic writings, and which have no place in early Christian history. In declining such terms of communion, we are but following the ancient rule. 'He does not perceive,' cried Theophilus of Alexandria, where he denounces Origen for mingling the subtleties of the philosophers in his discussions, 'he does not perceive that it is a devilish spirit which instigates men to follow the sophistical arguments of human speculation, and to consider anything as Divine which is not

[1] *The Principles of Ecclesiastical Unity* (1896), pp. 55 and 56.

included in the authoritative Scriptures.' Ecclesiastical unity can never be attained except upon the basis of a full and frank appeal to Holy Scripture, interpreted, not only in the light of accurate scholarship, but also in the light of history."

We desire nothing more, provided that the clauses in the above extract "in the germ" and "in the light of history" be not understood so to apply that mischievous principle of "development" which Canon Mason properly objects to in the Romanist, but is apt to sanction, in a modified form, from the Anglican point of view. The language of the Sixth Article of his own Church is enough for us:—

"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

Side by side with this Article, let us place the summary statement of Canon Knox Little, representing as he does the attitude of modern High Anglicanism:—

"All amounts to this—the Church is a Divine Society, and the arrangement of its officers is a Divine arrangement. It means that without bishops, who have received the grace of Orders by regular succession from the Apostles, you can have no priests, and that without bishops and priests you can have no certainty of true Sacraments. This, of course, is important, for Sacraments . . . are, by Divine revelation, a necessary means of union with Christ, and, in other words, a necessary means of salvation." [1]

Condensing the argument, it amounts to this: No bishop, no salvation. That raises in an acute form the question, Does the Church of England demand, as necessary to salvation, and therefore as an essential of

[1] *Sacerdotalism: A Reply to Canon Farrar*, p. 243.

ecclesiastical unity, a condition which is not "read in Holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby?" Canon Knox Little very properly says: "Bishops are either a Divine necessity, or their maintenance is a sin against the spirit of Christian brotherhood, a sin therefore against Christ." Not, of course, the maintenance of bishops as such, but the maintenance of episcopacy as belonging to the *esse*, not to the *bene esse* of the Church, is a sin against Christian brotherhood, unless its absolute *necessity* can be proved from Scripture. And, as Canon Mason admits that ecclesiastical unity can never be attained except upon the basis of "a full and frank appeal to Holy Scripture," does such a full and frank appeal, "in the light of accurate scholarship and of history," teach that the maintenance of diocesan episcopacy is essential to salvation?

We have no intention of arguing out this question for the thousandth time. We are only concerned with it in its relation to present-day attempts at reunion. It is well known that the fourth condition of reunion put forward by the Lambeth Pan-Anglican Synod in 1888 was the maintenance of "the historic episcopate"—an ambiguous phrase, to be understood, however, in the light of the Anglican formulæ in the preface to the ordinal. "It is evident unto all men, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church—bishops, priests, and deacons." The point at issue is not the existence of certain Church officers, nor their value and usefulness, nor even their apparent necessity at certain epochs of Church history. All students of ecclesiastical history are prepared, we imagine, to admit the immense value of episcopacy for the consolidation, the extension, and sometimes the very

existence of the Church; just as, with due modifications, the value of the Papacy at certain epochs is incontestable. But the necessity of a particular kind of episcopal government to the very existence of a true Church, and to the salvation of its individual members, is quite another matter. That this has not always been the doctrine of the Church of England, it would be easy to show. Hooker does not assert it. Andrewes writes to Molinæus: "It does not follow that there can be no church without bishops. He is blind that does not see churches standing without them." The name of Dr. Arnold is not in good odour with those who pride themselves on being good churchmen; but we imagine there are still Anglicans who would accept his words:—

"Now, to insist on the necessity of episcopacy, is exactly like insisting on the necessity of circumcision (in the Galatian Church); both are and were lawful, but to insist on either as *necessary* is unchristian, and binding the Church with a yoke of carnal ordinances. . . . I never accused Keble or Newman of saying that to belong to a true Church would save a bad man; but of what is unequally unchristian, that a good man was not safe unless he belonged to an Episcopal Church, which is exactly not allowing God's seal without it be countersigned by one of their own forging." [1]

We are dealing with the actual condition of ecclesiastical relations in this country, and it is idle to deny that Dr. Arnold's sober and scriptural view of this matter is not characteristic of modern Anglicanism, and that Canon Knox Little's is. Here and there may be found a church dignitary like Bishop Perowne, or Canon Farrar, who has courage enough to declare that

[1] *Life and Letters*, pp. 299, 300.

episcopacy concerns only the *bene esse*, not the *esse*, of the Church, but these are rare. It is only some two hundred years ago, as Mr. H. O. Wakeman, the most recent historian of the Church of England, has pointed out in his admirable *Introduction to English Church History*, that "two incompatible systems of religion" existed side by side in the Anglican Church, and one was bound to drive the other out. In 1662 it was settled that the one to be driven out was the Puritan or Presbyterian element; and Mr. Wakeman may be right in saying that no other course was possible. But the so-called "Catholic" element not only claims possession of the Church of England to-day, but bans as not belonging to the true Church of Christ, and virtually as not Christians at all, those Presbyterians who, at one time, formed an important constituent element of their own Church. This is precisely analogous to the action of the Pope which Anglicans are now so bitterly resenting.

That is to say, the analogy is complete, unless the necessity of diocesan episcopacy to the very existence of the Church can be proved from Scripture. Hence the importance of a right understanding of Scripture teaching on this subject. As we have said, to discuss this in detail is beyond our province. Suffice it to say, that Bishop Lightfoot's essay on the Christian Ministry of itself almost settles the question in the negative. The High Churchman relies on the identity between the diocesan bishops of to-day and the apostles. The "bishop" of the New Testament, as every one now knows, is not to be distinguished from the presbyter. If diocesan bishops are to be found in the New Testament at all, it can only be in the persons of the

Apostles, who are supposed to have delegated their powers to successors. But Bishop Lightfoot has shown that "Episcopacy was formed not out of the apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyterial order by elevation," as Scripture would lead us to suppose and the earliest documents of the Primitive Church sufficiently show. That Episcopacy was fully established before the end of the second century, may at once be admitted; and early in that century it was widely prevalent. That it has a primitive origin, and a long and glorious history, no one (so far as we are concerned) is disposed to deny. But necessary to the very existence of a Christian community, to the existence of a valid ministry, and to the salvation of individual members of the Church?—That is another matter.

Perhaps we owe our readers an apology for so far labouring this point. But we are anxious to make it clear that, as the Pope has been virtually guilty of "schism" in refusing to recognise Anglican orders on grounds not drawn from Holy Scripture, so are all those Anglicans acting the part of schismatics who set up conditions of Church constitution, and therefore of ecclesiastical unity, which cannot be clearly proved to be required in Scripture, the one rule of Christian faith and practice. Canon Mason, however, holds that any other method of appointing ministers than that public and authoritative method employed by the Established Church means "the legitimisation of anarchy," and he uses the illustration of the Wesleyan Methodist Society, which, "under the presidency of Jabez Bunting, decided to commence a Wesleyan ministry." We will not stop to correct the faulty history of Methodism implied in that phrase, but allow Mr. Mason to continue

his exposition. He holds that this procedure was "in principle anarchical." Not that such appointment of a ministry might not under such circumstances be excused, as in the case of the crew of the *Bounty*, or Sir T. More's Utopians. But

> "in a country where there is an authoritative Church—a Church which has not apostatised from the faith, and which imposes no terms of communion with which it is sinful to comply—there, for any group of Christians who have received no commission for the purpose to take upon them the office of ordaining is, I will not say inexcusable or necessarily wicked, but essentially anarchical."

Let us examine a moment. When Wesley, in 1784, ordained Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey, that they might take charge of the shepherdless flocks in America and administer the sacraments, he unquestionably did what was "anarchical," according to the teaching of the Church in which he was a presbyter. It was not his first, or his only "anarchical" act. There had been anarchy of a worse kind, a spiritual "chaos, dark and rude," in the Church of England before Wesley was raised up by God, and used by the Holy Spirit, to reawaken spiritual life amidst the darkness which was upon the face of the deep. In more than one respect he had been obliged to break through the strict laws of his Church, in order to accomplish the work he did. He was himself convinced, long before 1784, "that bishops and presbyters are of one order," and that "the plea of Divine right for diocesan Episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church." As a presbyter and the father of the Methodist Societies, he took it upon himself to appoint certain "superintendents" of the 15,000 Methodists in America; was he right or wrong? If he had been a bishop in the

English Church, he would have been technically right, though it is certain that even then his action would not have been approved. Did this breach of Anglican order imply an act of schism? The answer depends on the definition of schism; but on New Testament principles there was no rent made in the body of Christ. This the Anglican will not admit, and how shall such a controversy be determined? Might we not say that an appeal to history is very much in place, when Episcopalians and Presbyterians are unable to agree concerning the meaning of certain texts? Gamaliel's text is not obsolete: "If this counsel, or this work be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found fighting against God." We do not desire to point to the work of Methodism in America or in this country in any spirit of boastfulness, but the century which has elapsed since the events we speak of has set the seal of history upon the work which Wesley, at the close of his life, was beginning to hand over to his successors. The Divine Hand has taken this question out of human reach and shown, by the conversion of millions at home and abroad, that the difference between Episcopal and Presbyterial ordination does not precisely correspond to the difference between that which is of God and that which is of man, between the pale of "the true Church" and the work of "schism." When the complaint was made to George III. that General Wolfe was mad, he said in his blunt fashion, "I wish he would bite some of my other generals." If the work of Methodism be anarchic, it might not be amiss if the spirit of anarchy spread far and wide.

Canon Mason says that to his Church

"was given the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the signs of that indwelling have not disappeared. It would be faithless and disloyal to quit this Church. If unity is to be brought about, *that* is not the way to it. We must cry, like St. Austin to the Donatists, 'We cannot come out to you; do you come in to us.' Whatever counsel and humility and love unfeigned can devise to make the way of union easy and pleasant for you shall be done," etc.

With all respect, Presbyterians and Methodists reply, the signs of the Holy Spirit's indwelling are with us also; it would be faithless and disloyal to quit the communion for which the Divine Spirit has done so much, and by which, as we hold, God has yet a great work to do for the world. What prospect is held out, if the absorption of all Nonconformist bodies by the Anglican Church could be effected to-morrow? We speak with all respect of the Church of England, the mother of so many learned and pious sons, so many holy and devoted daughters. But a perusal of the Report of the last Church Congress will show that, for the Free Churches of this country to give up their modes of organisation and service for that of the Church of England, would mean virtual suicide. One of the richest Churches in the world is either unable or unwilling to provide for its poorer clergy, as well as many unendowed "denominations" provide for theirs. A wail goes up from year to year concerning the scandals in relation to the purchase of benefices, but the Church thus far has been powerless to help herself. The laity take the very scantiest part in her counsels or in active enterprise, and all the eloquent papers in Congress pleading for more scope for the laity seem to bring the desired consummation of a self-governing,

self-determining Church hardly any nearer. Yet it is on the ground of possessing the inestimable blessing of an order of clergy, with certain exclusive rights, that the Church of England expects Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists to give up their autonomy for State bondage. And the only mode of bringing about ecclesiastical unity that so moderate and reasonable a representative as Canon Mason can propose is, "Do you come in to us." Is it likely? Would it be for the good of the Anglican Church, of the Free Churches, and—what is much more important—of the true Church of Christ in this country, for such absorption to take place?

It can never be. It ought never to be. But that does not imply that Nonconformist Churches in this country expect the Anglican Church "to come out to them." Neither does it imply that Nonconformists hold the present distracted state of Christendom to be satisfactory. We do not consider the present multiplicity of Churches, with their existing strifes and jealousies, to be an "ideal condition," as even so fair a man as the late Dr. Hort seemed to charge Wesleyan Methodists with maintaining. We will not undertake to decide the abstract question, whether more good is accomplished by the diversity of organisations than would be achieved by a Christendom united in one huge Episcopal Church under an admirably ordered hierarchy. Something might be said on both sides; meanwhile, the discussion of such an academical question is futile. Our position is that, as Stillingfleet argued long ago. no particular form of Church organisation is laid down in the New Testament as necessary and universal. The germs of Episcopacy are to be found in its pages;

but also the germs—probably more than the germs—of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. It was the intention neither of the Lord nor His Apostles to stereotype for all generations, and for all countries, the *form* of Church organisation, and so repress its action, as Mohammedans are held in bondage by the dead hand of the Koran. Episcopacy is valuable enough; at one period of Church history it proved invaluable. But to attempt to realise Christian unity by insisting upon uniformity of officials is, at the same time, so un-Christlike and so impracticable, that we adopt Canon Mason's words, "if unity is to be brought about, *that* is not the way to it."

The only mode of attaining true unity is first of all to face the facts. Anglicans complain that the Pope will not face either the true history of the past or the actualities of the present; but English Churchmen are too often equally blind. The reunion of Christendom on the basis of uniformity of Church government is a chimera. The eighty millions of the Orthodox Church in the East stand yonder alone, scorning the heterodox and schismatic West. Some organs of the Anglican Church have intimated that after being rebuffed by the Pope, they will turn to "the more sympathetic East." What kind of reception do they suppose they will receive from M. Pobiedonostseff and the Holy Russian Church? Courtesy of course, when Bishop Creighton is deputed by the Queen to attend the coronation service of the Tsar; but when an Anglican clergyman expects to be received as a priest without reordination, or when free intercommunion is proposed? If they gain a favourable answer from "the sympathetic East," it will imply a new era in the history of that most

intolerant and immovable of Churches. It was found impossible, twenty years ago, even to come to terms with the Old Catholics, who are few in numbers, it is true, but who have a history and a standing-ground of their own which they cannot altogether be blamed for being unwilling to give up. Mr. Gladstone is, on this matter, an unexceptionable witness, for he is an Anglican of the Anglicans, but in writing on "Heresy and Schism," in 1894 he showed that he was a practical statesman as well. He pointed out that the conditions of modern life had brought about many changes. Protestantism, he reminded his high ecclesiastical friends, "is a hard, inexpugnable, intractable, indigestible fact," and Nonconformity also. He had the courage to point out, that to Nonconformists have been largely due most of the moral improvements effected in this country during this century, beginning with the emancipation of the slaves in 1833. "I speak," he says, "as one who knows."[1] This does not prove that Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and Methodism are better than Episcopacy, or even as good; but the history of the last three hundred years proves conclusively that the thriving plant of Christianity has grown too great, too vigorous, too fertile, ever to be again wholly restricted within the limits of an organisation which for a thousand years at the same time consolidated its forces and confined its growth. No principles of ecclesiastical unity will avail for the twentieth and succeeding centuries, which do not start from this fundamental and incontrovertible fact.

[1] Article on "Heresy and Schism" in *Nineteenth Century*, August 1894.

It will be said that our contribution to the solution of a difficult problem has thus far been negative only. It is true; since it seems to us that the chief hindrance in the way of realising Christian unity in these latter days is the prevalence of false ecclesiastical theories. A large part of the Christian Church is on the wrong track, looking in the wrong direction. The Anglican sees this in the case of the Romanist, the Romanist in the case of the Greek Church; but all alike cling to what is known as the "Catholic" theory, in spite of the *reductio ad absurdum* which their rival claims furnish for its refutation. Take the Roman Catholic Church, with its vaunted *Semper Eadem*, at its own valuation. The life of Cardinal Manning gives the outside world a glimpse, though only a passing and partial glimpse, at the kind of "unity" which is secured after all the severe drilling to which that rigidly, and in many respects admirably, organised Church subjects its soldiers. Take the Anglican Church with its "We are not divided, all one body we," and ask what holds together at the present moment, what has held together for three centuries, the heterogeneous elements of which that great and important Church is composed. It can hardly be questioned that its establishment and State connection makes it possible for men to work together whose opinions differ on some fundamental questions, and whose distrust of one another is sometimes painfully apparent. The composite nature of the Church of England is often represented as one of its glories, but a unity which so largely depends upon State control can hardly be described as ideal. The "Catholic" theory, moreover, is virtually disproved by the history of the last fifty

years, and the development of new countries like the United States and Canada, Australia, and South Africa. Give existing Christian communities a fair start, and experience shows that those which sway and hold and improve the rising populations of the future are *not* those to whom, according to this ecclesiastical theory, the grace of God alone is vouchsafed. In all progress towards abiding unity this theory is the chief obstacle which blocks the way.

When we pass to communities which are unshackled by its bondage, the way is comparatively clear. "Free" Churches, as they not unjustly call themselves, differ very considerably from one another, but there is no insuperable impediment in the way of their drawing nearer to one another. They are so approaching one another very rapidly: and, unless we are mistaken, the twentieth century will witness amongst them something like a practical realisation of the only kind of unity worth aiming at. What this is, we will try shortly to show; but at the outset we are met by a twofold objection on the part of "Catholics" against all these Evangelical bodies taken together. It is said (1) that they stand for nothing positive; their only common ground is a "protest," an agreement *not* to "conform"; and secondly that they possess no Christian continuity. "Protestantism had no existence before Luther," and therefore must be both novel and negative, two features fatal to unity. These objections are shallow enough, but they are plausible, and must be met.

We confess to sharing the objection raised by the negative words "Dissenter," "Nonconformist," "Protestant." None of these represents any positive truth

round which men may rally or by which men may live. "Evangelical" is the only name in existence that will serve, and it may be objected to on the ground that these Churches possess no monopoly of the gospel, whilst some of its associations as a party watchword make it undesirable. Name or no name, however, it ought to be clear enough that the central truths which the Free Churches of this country (for example) hold in common are such as furnish a complete and adequate basis for Christian unity. There are many ways of showing this. We take for a moment the line adopted by Dr. P. T. Forsyth, in his lectures on *The Charter of the Church*:—

"The idea of Nonconformity, if we look away from its foreign and imperfect forms, is *the autonomy, supremacy, and ethical quality of the spiritual principle.* This is the greatest of heavenly purposes, the loveliest of earthly dreams, the most undying of historic forces—it is the Kingdom of GOD. Every true Church is an agent for the promotion of that Kingdom. Every Church is false in so far as it claims to *be* that Kingdom. Hence Nonconformity is not a Church, but a movement among Churches. It is an aspect rather than a section of the Church. And it becomes amazingly active in the very bosom of the Established Church itself at every period of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. It is the Pentecostal principle in the history of religion, and it flames afresh in every age when the soul most glows in its redeemed sense of mastery over the world."

Justification by faith, the supremacy of Scripture, the right and duty of private judgment—these are not negatives, these were not new in the sixteenth century. Compare them with—justification by baptism; the supremacy of the Pope, or the king, or the bishop; and the right or duty of unchurching all to whom grace has not been communicated through the fictitious channel

of "Apostolical succession." Surely the Evangelical has as much positive truth in which to glory as the Catholic; surely the principle of continuity is as fully represented by those who seek to hand on the treasure of spiritual truth, of Evangelical faith, and of direct access of the soul to God in Christ, as by those who can point to a more outward and visible chain of connection binding them to the past.

But it is continually said—

"This very principle has been the cause of disunion. Till the sixteenth century, these miserable divisions were unknown. Protestantism has shattered the vase, and so long as its principles obtain, its restoration is impossible."

Unity of the old kind is impossible, certainly; but it is a part of our very argument that the attempt to secure unity by outward organisation has failed. It is, to borrow a phrase of Dean Church in another connection, "the most magnificent failure in history." The effort was splendid, the ruin which the failure has wrought is correspondingly great. Till this terrible mistake is unlearned, the mischief will continue. The false unity is being shattered, in order that a true, spiritual unity may be built upon its ruins.

"We must develop their principle," says Dr. Forsyth of the Reformers, "and reform the Reformation. Our enemies would undo it. The Reformers did not mean all the blessings the Reformation has brought us, especially its political and social blessings. It was not done with a supreme regard for the Church's outward organic unity. But that is not a New Testament ideal at all. Yet the Separatists did not act from a love of separation and a hatred of unity. They acted from union with Christ, from a resolve to obey Christ directly; to let Him rule their faith, and so their lives, at any cost—at the cost even, if the dread necessity came, of Church unity."

And so, again, without full consciousness of what they have been doing, the "Nonconformists" of the last three centuries have been laying the foundations of a deeper and more abiding unity. The stones have long lain beneath the ground, and now the walls of the structure are beginning to appear.

Doubtless many mistakes have been made. This was almost inevitable. A large part of the strength of Nonconformists has been spent in mutual controversy. When attempts have been made to unite they have not always been wisely made. The failure of the Evangelical Alliance—we must call it failure, though the phrase will provoke a protest amongst its remaining members—is often alleged as an illustration of the inability of Evangelicals to agree and work together. But we are compelled to say that the personal devotedness and kindly feeling of many of the clergy of the Church of England could not disguise the fact that ecclesiastical theories prevented hearty co-operation on the part of that Church with such a movement; whilst the attempt to construct a kind of new doctrinal basis of agreement was not a happy one. The federation of the Free Evangelical Churches of this country, which is now being rapidly and successfully organised, is free from some defects which have proved fatal to fraternisation in the past. In the first place, those who take part are unfettered by cramping theories of priesthood and "orders." There is nothing to prevent the free interchange of pulpits, or united worship and communion. In the second place, federation, not organic union in any shape, is aimed at. The integrity of each Church is preserved. If there be aught in doctrine, or organisation, or worship, for which

the Presbyterian is a witness that it is not sufficiently secured in Congregationalism, there is no interference with this, and the same is true all round. In the third place, a more complete mutual acquaintance is promoted, which will surely result in the removal of many prejudices and misunderstandings, and will make it possible to discern what denominational peculiarities are worth retaining, and what may, without loss to the Church of Christ, be decently discarded and buried. Already a network of organisation is covering the country, which in the course of the next decade may possibly revolutionise the condition of the Free Churches in this country, so far as their relation to one another is concerned. The great danger in the way is that of mixing political with evangelical ends and aims.

How far organic union should be attempted, is a question important in its place, but that place is secondary. Those who accept the views of unity here laid down will not be supremely anxious to secure the fusion of existing organisations. If the work of Christ can be better done by organic reunion, if questions of doctrine, of Church government, of methods of action, and the like, can be settled without causing fresh division, and if public opinion is ripe, by all means let the communities in question join forces. But this will not make them one, unless they were virtually one before. Spiritual unity is a plant which must grow from roots, it will not appear under the sleight of hand of any conjurer who has learnt the "mango trick." All history teaches that if the motto *Festina lente* has place anywhere, it is under conditions such as these. To remove jealousies, strifes, desire for precedence,

prejudices, ignorance leading to misrepresentation, narrowness, and bigotry of all kinds, is at the same time a nobler and a less showy task than to preside at a conference for the immediate organic union of Churches, and evoke applause by the enunciation of sounding platitudes. But no Christian who has the spirit of his Master can be cold or careless about efforts which really bring Christians nearer to one another. The more clearly the idea of inward, spiritual unity, as the only worthy ideal for the Christian Church, is grasped, the more strenuous and earnest will be the effort by all available means to promote it. The man who is languid in such enterprises has never really understood what spiritual unity means.

We may conclude by saying that, amidst all existing diversities, a deep and abiding unity *does* exist, which no sectarian controversies can prevent or disturb. Man did not make it, man can hardly mar it. It is a "Unity of the Spirit," which Christians are bidden not to create or achieve, but to "guard, in the bond of peace." It is still, as it was in the days of the early Ephesian Church, a unity wrought by one Divine Spirit, a unity of common trust, of common devotion to the same Lord, of a common calling brightened and crowned by a common hope. There is still, as there was then, "one baptism," "one body," whilst now, as then, there are "diversities of administration and diversities of operation"; one God, one Lord, one Spirit working in and through them all. This unity is possible for every Christian to keep, despite the bulls of Popes or the contentions of rival ecclesiastical systems. The light of eternity will make many of the

artificial distinctions which disfigure Christendom appear very small; and it is happily possible even here and now to live very largely in the light of eternity. All who aid in lifting this subject into the upper air of the spiritual and eternal are helping to guard the Christian unity which already exists, and promote the attainment of that "unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God" which is yet to come. We are glad to be able to use as indicative of the right spirit in which to meet the many disappointments which lovers of unity continually have to face, the language of two prelates of the Church of England in reference to the Pope's Bull. Other communities of Christians may adopt them almost without variation. The Bishop of Manchester said, in his Diocesan Council, in October last:—

"When the alternative is put before us—either admit what you believe to be false, or renounce the hope of reunion; either submit to a palpable usurpation, or forego the solace of paternal love—only one decision is possible. We cannot surrender our Christ-given freedom; we cannot consciously assert what appears to us to be a falsehood for any conceivable advantage. What then remains for us is to think as charitably as we can of those who exclude us from their communion, and to carry out in this nation and elsewhere, with the full assurance of our right to do so, that mission of Divine mercy which, as a branch of the Catholic Church, our Divine Master has committed to us."

The Bishop of Ripon said, on a similar occasion:—

"We are sure that the ultimate basis of the union of Christendom will not be submission to any one ecclesiastic, or the acceptance of any mediæval or modern additions to the creed, or agreement in any metaphysical definitions, but it will be in the fuller realisation of the living God as the Father of all men, in the deeper conceptions of the significance of the redeeming work of

Christ our Lord, and in the free recognition of the working in the Church and in the world of that Divine Spirit, Who is the Lord and Giver of Life.

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